CABINET

Monday 16 November 2026
10.00 a.m.
Council Chamber, Rotherham Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH

Cabinet Members:-

Leader of the Council	Councillor Chris Read
Deputy Leader & Children and Young People Portfolio	Councillor Victoria Cusworth
Adult Social Care and Health Portfolio	Councillor Joanna Baker-Rogers
Housing Portfolio	Councillor Linda Beresford
Finance and Community Safety Portfolio	Councillor Saghir Alam
Waste Services, Leisure and Green Spaces Portfolio	Councillor Lynda Marshall
Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy Portfolio	Councillor John Williams
Communities Portfolio	Councillor Sarah Allen

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

CABINET

Venue:	**The Town Hall, The Crofts, Moorgate Street, Rotherham. S60 2TH**
Date and Time:	**Monday 16 November 2026 at 10.00 a.m.**
Agenda Contact	**Governance Unit – governance@rotherham.gov.uk**

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

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

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence

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

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Questions from Members of the Public

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

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

Councillors may also ask questions under this agenda item.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 11 - 32)

To receive the record of proceedings of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 October 2026.

5. Exclusion of the Press and Public

There are no exempt agenda items.

DEPUTY LEADER AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

6. Rotherham SEND Reform Plan (Pages 33 - 107)

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

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026–2029 and the Council's role in its delivery.

2. Endorse the strategic direction of travel towards earlier identification and intervention, stronger mainstream inclusion, increased local provision and a mature multi-agency Experts at Hand model.

3. Note the first-year delivery plan and associated performance, governance and risk-management arrangements set out within the Local SEND Reform Plan.

4. Note the financial strategy underpinning reform, including the 2026/27 Schools Block to High Needs Block transfer of 0.5%, equivalent to £1.3m, and the alignment of high-needs capital investment to mainstream accessibility, inclusion bases, specialist provision, and alternative provision.

7. Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report (Pages 109 - 172)

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

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026; and

2. Notes the partnership priorities and areas requiring continued assurance for 2026 to 2027.

FINANCE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

8. September 2026-27 Financial Monitoring Report (Pages 173 - 200)

Report from the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £2.9m.

2. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme.

3. Approve the capital budget variations as detailed in Section 2.17 of the report.

4. Note early payment of £3.052m grant from the Transport for City Regions (TCR) fund, as detailed in section 2.18.5 of the report.

5. Note the allocation of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Revenue Fund grant from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) as detailed in 2.24 and delegate the decision to allocate and spend all future tranches to the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy.

9. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update (Pages 201 - 222)

Report from the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet note the MTFS 2026/27 to 2029/30 update.

10. Maintained Schools Long Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP) (Pages 223 - 247)

Report from the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the commencement of the maintained schools stock condition and asset verification survey programme, funded through existing capital budgets.

2. Note the emerging evidence that condition, compliance and lifecycle investment requirements may exceed available Department for Education School Condition Allocation funding, subject to completion and validation of the surveys.

3. Agree the proposed principles for assessing the condition survey findings

and prioritising future investment, including joint working with Children and Young People's Services on school place sufficiency, future educational demand and planned academy conversions.

4. Agree to receive a further report following completion of the stock condition surveys setting out the quantified maintenance backlog, prioritised investment requirements, proposed programme of works and associated funding requirements.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

11. Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure - Service Level Agreements (2027-2030) (Pages 249 - 275)

Report from the Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1) Agree to progress the arrangements for VCS Infrastructure Services in Rotherham, including:
    a) The proposed model being delivered through a standard SLA for three years commencing from 1 April 2027 and continuing to 31 March 2030, which is based on the findings of a co-design exercise.
    b) Funding of £573,000 being awarded as a grant to Voluntary Action Rotherham, in annual payments of £191,000, to deliver the three-year SLA.

2) Agree to progress the arrangements for Advice Services in Rotherham, including:
    a) The proposed model being delivered through a standard SLA for three years commencing from 1 April 2027 and continuing to 31 March 2030, which is based on the findings of a co-design exercise.
    b) Funding of £999,000 being awarded as a grant to Citizens Advice Rotherham and District, in annual payments of £333,000, to deliver the three-year SLA.
    c) Utilising £93,000 of funding per annum previously allocated for pension credit advice as part of the 2025/26 Council Budget process to fund the increase to the Advice Services SLA.

TRANSPORT, JOBS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

12. Improving Places Select Commission Scrutiny Review - School Road Safety (Pages 277 - 300)

Report from the Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement.

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet receives the recommendations listed below, as approved by the Improving Places Select Commission and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board;

   a) **Improved Cross-Directorate Working**

      i) Develop a cross-directorate map of roles and responsibilities (e.g. highways, school engagement, enforcement, crossing patrol) to establish and embed stronger partnership working across Council services, including improvements to internal reporting and decision-making systems and processes aligned across directorates.

      ii) Consider the feasibility of establishing a cross-directorate working group (that meets regularly, with clear terms of reference and a governance structure) to oversee school road safety in Rotherham. The aim of this working group would be to drive and coordinate delivery and provide increased accountability and visibility.

      iii) Any established school road safety working group should be launched as the front-facing, main point of contact for collaboration with residents, schools, Councillors, and partners related to school road safety, to ensure the Council's commitment to school road safety is both visible and accessible. Consider the creation of a dedicated section of the Council website on school road safety to support this.

      iv) Work together with ward Councillors to progress the development of ward-specific road safety plans, each to contain a section on road safety issues around local schools. These plans would inform each ward's CAP development plans.

      v) In the spirit of the new Neighbourhood Leadership Strategy, council services should endeavour to keep Councillors regularly informed on any new plans relating to transport and school road safety and/or works due to be carried out within their wards at the earliest possible opportunity.

   b) **Data, Monitoring and Strategic Alignment**

      i) Take steps to improve baseline data collection around schools (e.g traffic, parking, reported incidents, travel behaviours). Establishment of centralised, cross-directorate incident reporting and escalation processes would help to identify areas of concern and need, which in turn, would inform the prioritisation of potential projects and pilot school locations.

      ii) Develop a coordinated, borough-wide School Road Safety Strategy, to be aligned with SYMCA's regional action plans and travel

strategies – such as the new South Yorkshire Transport Strategy and the Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Strategy.

iii) Explore what regional support may be available via the Safer Roads Partnership and the Active Lives & Safer Roads teams at SYMCA, for example, access to shared data mapping tools/systems and funding opportunities.

iv) Consider the coordination of projects with neighbouring local authorities via SYMCA, which would provide opportunities for enhanced economies of scale.

c) **Funding Development**

i) Establish a defined and protected allocation for school road safety projects within wider capital transport funding to ensure longer-term funding streams that can support the shift to a more proactive and coordinated approach.

ii) Use the recommended enhanced data collection models to strengthen the evidence base to support future funding bids. Develop a clear pipeline of projects to maximise use of Transport for City Regions and Integrated Settlement Active Travel funding via SYMCA to support school road safety.

iii) Work with SYMCA to explore how Rotherham could benefit from the government's new Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and the projected £4.5 billion of investment to be made available over the next 5 years.

iv) Develop a balanced programme of low-cost interventions (signage, markings, speed reduction measures) and targeted higher-cost schemes, using the suggested enhanced data collection models to provide evidence to inform and justify the prioritisation of certain schools and schemes.

v) Develop a funding stream to support opportunities for increased work with and support for schools across the borough (see d) School Engagement & Active Travel below).

vi) Strengthen existing work with the Planning team to ensure early identification of any potential section 106 developer funding for specific road safety improvements/schemes.

d) **School Engagement & Active Travel**

i) Urgently undertake a borough-wide survey of all schools to better understand their concerns and needs regarding school road safety.

ii) Using the results of the survey and enhanced data mapping models

(alongside existing knowledge and data), identify a priority list of schools in the borough for targeted intervention (e.g. top 10/20/30).

iii) Give consideration to the provision of additional dedicated School Engagement Officers/Active Travel Officers to strengthen trust and engagement with school leaders and governors. Such officers would be able to support enhanced engagement activities, such as assemblies, parent consultation and the promotion of Active Travel initiatives. This in turn, would help to encourage overall behaviour change from both pedestrians, drivers, and other road users around schools.

iv) Consider the creation of a borough-wide "Junior Road Safety Officer Programme" to allow schools and their pupils to lead on initiatives appropriate to their school settings. This would engage and benefit pupils in taking ownership of schemes to support their schools.

v) Conduct a full exploration of the different Active Travel schemes that are available (e.g Mode Shift Stars) and identify which schools already have an Active Travel Plan in place. Schools need support in applying for accreditation to such schemes and in implementing them, which should form part of the role of any additional School Engagement/Active Travel Officers.

vi) Identify any schools which may be suitable for the establishment of a School Streets pilot scheme, bearing in mind the fact that any School Streets scheme would need to be supported by proven prior active travel initiatives, and an engaged and committed senior leadership team and parent community.

vii) Work towards coordinating any existing initiatives (e.g Bikeability) into a single, coherent offer, introducing more child-centred, "fun first" campaigns. Invite external experts and teams from SYMCA and neighbouring local authorities to share best practice and success stories.

e) **Enforcement & Crossing Patrol**

i) Establish better cross-directorate data-sharing systems (as per a) above), to ensure that data collected by the Crossing Patrol and Parking Enforcement teams regarding incidents/near-misses and offences are monitored and used to inform decisions on priority sites and projects.

ii) Consider opportunities for the pilot use of body-cameras by crossing patrollers, giving due regard to safeguarding and data protection concerns.

iii) Conduct a detailed feasibility review into wider camera enforcement rollout of redeployable/static ANPR cameras, including a cost-benefit

analysis and identification of suitable pilot locations.

iv) Consider further investment in roaming CCTV vehicles to support compliance and enforcement for parking offences around schools. Capacity for enforcement is currently limited to one CCTV van for all 200+ schools in the borough. A lack of a regular presence leads to inconsistent and ineffective enforcement.

v) Explore the potential for increased engagement with South Yorkshire Police, including a possible joint approach to promoting local anti-parking campaigns and joint responses at problem locations.

vi) Monitor and review forthcoming government guidance on footway parking powers. Consider any opportunities to tie the local enforcement approach into any future RMBC Pavement Parking Policy.

2. That Cabinet formally considers its response to the above recommendations within two months of its receipt, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3. That in responding to these recommendations, it is requested that Cabinet's response should identify the proposed actions, responsible officer(s), success measures and target completion dates for each recommendation.

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

To receive a report detailing the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in respect of the above items that were subject to pre-decision scrutiny on 10 November 2026.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Monday 14 December 2026 commencing at 10.00am in Rotherham Town Hall.



John Edwards,
Chief Executive.

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THE CABINET
12th October, 2026

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

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

Officers in attendance:

John Edwards	Chief Executive
Andrew Bramidge	Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment
Ian Spicer	Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health
Nicola Curley	Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services
Phil Horsfield	Service Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Rob Mahon	Service Director of Financial Se4rvices
Sarah Clyde	Service Director of Housing
Helen Sweaton	Service Director of Commissioning and Performance
Mike Thomas	Electoral Services Manager
Alan Pogorzelec	Service Manager, Business Regulation
Emma Hill	Head of Democratic Services
Samantha Mullarkey	Governance Advisor and Clerk

Also in attendance:

Angel Lackova	Rotherham Children and Young People's Partnership
Ashleigh Lackova	Rotherham Children and Young People's Partnership
Isaac Troop	Rotherham Children and Young People's Partnership
Charlotte Oram	Rotherham Children and Young People's Partnership

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two questions:

1. Councillor Thorp asked a question regarding the money that the Council had received from the sale of a ransom strip of land on Worrygoose Lane and whether it could be used for road safety and school road safety schemes in the Sitwell Ward. He had attended a meeting with the Chief Executive, Service Director of Legal Services and Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement, followed by a second meeting with the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and

Transport, and Head of Transport. It had been made clear by the Executive Director that it was not within his gift to allocate any of the £4.5 million fund. Councillor Thorp asked whether further meaningful discussions could take place regarding how much of the money could be used for the road safety projects in Sitwell, especially in light of the removal of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Scheme and associated road safety proposals.

The Leader stated that he had been and still was sympathetic to the idea that the community that had faced some challenges due to the building of houses on the ransom strip should receive some benefit from the Capital Receipt. However, the Council's Financial Procedure Rules meant that a separate decision through the budget process would be required to release some of that funding. The Leader encouraged officers to undertake work to identify what the headline numbers for the schemes could be. It would then be part of the budget-setting process to allocate funding. The Leader stated that he would expect some of the funding to be brought forward for the schemes.

Councillor Thorp stated that he did not expect to receive the full amount; he simply wanted the schemes to progress. He also referenced Cabinet's decision to remove the £3 million funding for Worrygoose Island. Councillor Thorp explained that he wanted to ensure that the matter remained under consideration.

The Leader offered assurances that it had not been forgotten. He clarified that the £3 million for Worrygoose Island had been withdrawn because it had not been possible to identify a viable scheme. In relation to future road safety schemes, the Leader hoped to share positive news in the coming months.

2. Andrew Bates asked a question in relation to Wickersley Underpass, which had been closed for 17 weeks since Christmas 2025. He explained that he had sent emails to the Transport Service and Street Pride but had received no responses. He just wanted to find out what was happening and when it would reopen but was getting no information.

   The Leader stated that this was not acceptable and he was sorry that Mr. Bates had had that experience with the Council.

   The Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment explained that it was a complex issue as the manner in which the underpass had been constructed meant that it was very susceptible to flooding. However, progress was being made, and a specialist pump was due to be installed in the coming week. The Service was also looking at longer-term solutions, which could involve a new set of pumps or potentially filling in the underpass and creating a new surface-level crossing.

In his supplementary question, Mr. Bates asked whether a spare pump could be sourced for when the current pump fails.

The Executive Director stated that the pump due to be fitted in the coming week had been sourced from mainland Europe, but the Service would look into the request.

52. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14th September, 2026 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

53. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Minute No. 63 (Strategic Acquisitions – Appendix 1) was exempt under Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

54. EXTRA CARE HOUSING MODEL

Consideration was given to the report which summarised the feedback received from the 90 day consultation and proposed a model for the provision of Extra Care Housing in Rotherham. Extra Care Housing (ECH) was recognised nationally for providing people aged 55 years and over with independent, self-contained homes within a community setting, combined with on-site care and support services available 24 hours a day. It aimed to support older adults to sustain their independence and tenancy by offering varying levels of person-centred care and support. Rotherham had two ECH schemes, Bakers Field Court, and Potteries Court, offering 88 tenancies in total.

In April 2026, Cabinet approved a period of consultation on a proposed model for the delivery of care and support to tenants living in Extra Care Housing (ECH) schemes in Rotherham. The focus of the proposal was to ensure Adult Social Care could deliver a quality and sustainable model that met the support needs of tenants living in the Potteries Court and Bakers Field Court ECH schemes.

The preferred option outlined in the last report and subject to consultation, was for the schemes to be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) so that Council-employed staff could meet tenants' personal care and support needs, focussed on ways to strengthen the existing care and support provision for tenants living in ECH. The preferred option's intention was to ensure a flexible, person-focussed approach which would improve outcomes for people whilst ensuring value for money and sustainable investment in the Council's workforce.

A Council-employed team of enablement-focused staff would meet tenants' Care Act eligible care needs with the provision modelled on the existing enablement approach embedded within Adult Social Care Provider Services. This approach focussed on maximising people's independence and wellbeing. Existing tenants would retain the right to choose who they received care and support from. Whilst the Council would honour the arrangements existing tenants had in place with independent providers, should tenants choose to retain this, future new tenants would be provided with core hours from the on-site care team, whilst still maintaining choice and control over their care and support for assessed hours that exceeded this.

The findings from the consultation were consistently positive with 94% of people either supporting or strongly supporting this model. Section 4 of the report provided a detailed overview of the consultation approach and the findings.

Cabinet Members expressed their support for the proposals, stating that it would result in a better service with better value for money.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the feedback from the consultation.

2. Approve implementation of the proposed final model, as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report submitted.

55. MOVING ROTHERHAM PARTNERSHIP - DELIVERY OF PLACE EXPANSION GRANT

Consideration was given to the report which provided an overview of proposed further Sport England investment for Rotherham as part of the Place Expansion Programme. It outlined key activities to be undertaken to expand opportunities for physical activity and deliver on the Moving Rotherham Partnership priorities.

In 2023, Sport England invited places across the country to apply to become Place Expansion Partners as part of its Uniting the Movement Strategy. Rotherham was successful in securing a Place Expansion Grant Development Award of £455,870. Cabinet approved acceptance and expenditure of this funding in March 2025, with delivery managed by the Council's Public Health Service on behalf of the Moving Rotherham Partnership. Following the success of the development phase, Rotherham had secured a further Sport England Place Expansion Grant Main Award totalling £1.1 million to improve physical activity and continue to increase the scale and pace of the Moving Rotherham Partnership's delivery.

Following the development phase evaluation, the Moving Rotherham Partnership developed a new Physical Activity and Sport Strategy for Rotherham. This was developed by the Partnership to provide a clear narrative of the aims of Moving Rotherham, to set priority themes for delivery and provide a framework for a delivery plan.

The Moving Rotherham Strategy described three priority audiences that aligned with Sport England's Uniting the Movement Strategy:

- Children and young people,
- People with long-term health conditions and/or disabilities, and
- Communities where activity levels are lowest.

A delivery plan set out the funding requirements from the bid aligned to these priorities. The new proposed additional funding allocated as a Place Expansion Main Award grant was £1,145,438 until March 2028. There was also an additional £15,000 Capital grant as described in paragraph 2.17.

Cabinet Members applauded officers for their work in securing this Borough-wide investment.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve the acceptance and spending of the Rotherham Sport England Grants (comprising the Main Award and Capital Grant) in line with Sport England grant conditions and as set out in section 2 of the report submitted.

56. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD SCRUTINY REVIEW - STREET LIGHTING COLUMNS

Consideration was given to the report which presented the findings and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB)/Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) Scrutiny Review into attachments to street lighting columns.

The review was commissioned following a Notice of Motion approved by Full Council in April 2026 concerning the impact of structural testing requirements on community initiatives such as hanging baskets, festive decorations, remembrance displays and CCTV installations. The review examined the balance between public safety requirements and the financial and operational impact on Parish and Town Councils. Evidence was gathered from officers, Parish Councils, survey responses and examples of practice from other authorities.

The recommendations sought to establish a clear, proportionate and transparent framework that supported community-led initiatives whilst ensuring the safety and effective management of highway assets.

In moving the report, Councillor Allen thanked OSMB and IPSC for their work and for completing a very thorough review. She welcomed the recommendations, particularly the introduction of a framework that would apply to all and the efforts to improve communication with Parish Councils. Councillor Allen explained that the response would be led by herself as Cabinet Member for Communities and Councillor Williams as Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy.

Councillor Steele was invited to speak to the report. He thanked officers for their work and for ensuring that the review progressed at pace. Clear information had been provided to the review group which enabled a very positive, cross-party process.

Councillor Williams thanked Scrutiny for their work on this matter. He also reiterated that there were no restrictions relating to the installation of poppies on street lighting columns. The Leader confirmed that incorrect information had been given out by the Council on this matter and he wanted to be clear on this as Remembrance Sunday approached – there were no restrictions on poppies.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet receives the recommendations listed below, as approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

    1. Approve amendments to the Highway Asset Management Plan to incorporate a comprehensive framework for attachments to lighting columns and associated highway assets, setting out requirements relating to permitted and prohibited attachments, risk-based approval arrangements, structural testing and retesting requirements, applicant responsibilities, and enforcement provisions. The framework should apply consistently to all users of street lighting columns, including the Council, Parish and Town Councils, contractors and third parties.

    2. Approve the development and publication of a standalone, publicly accessible Street Lighting Column Attachments Guidance Document, in consultation with Parish and Town Councils, to provide clear and practical guidance on the application of the Highway Asset Management Plan framework, including attachment classifications, approval processes, testing requirements, responsibilities, communication arrangements, and practical examples of acceptable and unacceptable attachments.

    3. Establish formal consultation, communication and engagement arrangements with Parish and Town Councils, including consultation on future policy changes, testing programmes and charging arrangements, together with sufficient advance notice of any financial implications to enable effective budget planning, procurement and decision-making.

4. Establish clear categories for street lighting column attachments, identifying which attachments are permitted without testing, permitted subject to approval and structural testing, or prohibited, and publish consistent standards for structural testing, assessment criteria, retesting intervals, validity periods and maximum permissible loading thresholds where appropriate.

5. Continues to co-ordinate structural testing arrangements on a Borough wide basis where appropriate and considers longer-term funding, procurement and cost-sharing arrangements to minimise administrative burdens and secure value for money for Parish and Town Councils whilst maintaining compliance with relevant safety standards.

6. Ensures arrangements are developed to support the continuation of community display schemes where street lighting columns are unable to safely accommodate attachments, including consideration of alternative display solutions, targeted asset replacement where appropriate, the use of structural testing outcomes to identify trends, inform the Council's future investment priorities, replacement programmes and wider asset management decisions.

7. That the Service engages in meaningful discussions with interested parties including Parish Councils, seeking to install displays on street lighting columns, with the aim of reaching a shared understanding regarding the timescales and process for replacing damaged or missing columns, and to explore opportunities to facilitate timely installation where feasible.

8. Strengthen the enforcement framework for unauthorised attachments by establishing clear compliance procedures and, where legally permissible, implementing arrangements for the recovery of costs incurred in the removal of unauthorised installations, and reviews the effectiveness of the new arrangements within 12 months of implementation, including consideration of feedback from Parish and Town Councils, testing outcomes and enforcement activity, with the findings reported to the relevant Scrutiny Board.

2. That Cabinet formally considers its response to the above recommendations within two months of its receipt, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3. That in responding to these recommendations, it is requested that Cabinet's response should identify the proposed actions, responsible officer(s), success measures and target completion dates for each recommendation.

57. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which provided an overview of current activity undertaken by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board to ensure children and young people's voices were influencing priorities, informing challenge to leaders and co-producing solutions across the partnership. In July 2025 the Children and Young People's Partnership Board agreed to develop a strategy that showed how important children and young people were in Rotherham, what was great about Rotherham from a children and young people's perspective and what the Board were going to do to make it even better.

The report outlined the key activity undertaken in developing the new Children's Strategy, including a needs analysis focused on things that were important to children and young people, consultation and engagement and co-production. The report sought endorsement of the Rotherham Children's Strategy and outlined the timeline for implementation to achieve the aims identified.

Angel Lackova, Ashleigh Lackova, Isaac Troop and Charlotte Oram from the Rotherham Children and Young People's Partnership spoke about their Strategy. They explained that young people felt left behind and wanted to ensure that their voice was heard. The Strategy was about levelling the playing field and creating real change. It was noted that Town Centre safety, vaping and the lack of jobs for young people were huge concerns. The young people also stressed the need for Council communications to be more relevant and age appropriate.

The Young People highlighted the priorities from the Strategy which were:

1. To continue to scrutinise the Rotherham Plan - to keep Rotherham a family friendly Borough, the Children and Young People's Partnership Board would make sure children and young people continued to influence decision making and service delivery in Rotherham, challenging and supporting adults.

2. To develop a Youth Club Curriculum - to improve the support available to children and young people attending community groups and youth clubs, CYPPB would develop a toolkit for workers to use to talk about things that were important to children and young people.

3. To create opportunities for children and young people to develop content to improve communications with children and young people - to help more children and young people know about the fun things to do in Rotherham and the work the Council and other organisations did to make it cleaner and safer, CYPPB will improve communications.

The Rotherham Children's Strategy detailed how each action would be delivered (when and what) and the impact under each aim. The Rotherham Children's Strategy was included as Appendix 1 of the report submitted.

Cabinet Members thanked Angel, Ashleigh, Isaac and Charlotte for attending the meeting and they applauded the way in which they used their voices to champion young people. Members fully supported the Strategy and looked forward to the meaningful outcomes.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the activity to date of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, a co-chaired, youth-led forum embedded in Borough governance, where young people set priorities, challenge leaders, and co-produce solutions alongside senior leaders across the partnership.

2. Endorse the Rotherham Children's Strategy for implementation from October 2026.

58. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to the report which provided an overview of the first stage consultation responses and set out draft recommendations for consideration and approval. Subject to Cabinet's approval, a second stage of public consultation would be undertaken to seek views on the draft recommendations. Following the conclusion of the consultation period, a final recommendations report would then be submitted to Cabinet. It was a function of Council to approve the final recommendations arising from the review.

Following approval by Cabinet on 13th April 2026, Rotherham Council commenced a Community Governance Review on 1st May 2026 as set out in the agreed Terms of Reference (Appendix 1). An initial consultation took place between 1st May and 26th June 2026, providing residents, local councils, community groups, and other stakeholders with the opportunity to submit their views on existing governance arrangements and any potential changes they would wish the review to consider.

The consultation received just under two hundred responses, representing views on existing Parish, Town and Community Councils, together with interest in the establishment of new Parish Councils. The anonymised First Stage Consultation Responses were shown in Appendix 2.

Paragraph 2.1 of the report provided details of the responses received that were outside of the scope of the review.

Paragraphs 2.3 to 2.33 of the report provided a summary of the consultation responses by Parish/Town/Community Council/Meeting. Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.31 outlined the recommendations in relation to each Parish/Town/Community Council/Meeting:

Parish Council/ Meeting	Consultation Summary – Paragraph Number	Recommendation Summary – Paragraph Number
Anston	2.3	3.1
Aston-cum-Aughton	2.4	3.2
Brampton	2.5	3.4
Bramley	2.6	3.3
Brinsworth	2.7	3.5
Catcliffe	2.8	3.6
Dalton	2.9	3.7
Dinnington St John's	2.10	3.8
Firbeck	2.11	3.9
Gildingwells	2.12	3.10
Harthill-with-Woodall	2.13	3.11
Hellaby	2.14	3.12
Hooton Levitt	2.15	3.13
Hooton Roberts	2.16	3.14
Laughton-en-le-Morthen	2.17	3.15
Letwell	2.18	3.16
Maltby	2.19	3.17
Orgreave	2.20	3.18
Ravenfield	2.21	3.19
Thorpe Salvin	2.22	3.20
Thrybergh	2.23	3.21
Thurcroft	2.24	3.22
Todwick	2.25	3.23
Treeton	2.26	3.24
Ulley	2.27	3.25
Wales	2.28	3.26
Waverley	2.29	3.27
Wentworth	2.30	3.28
Whiston	2.31	3.29
Wickersley	2.32	3.30
Woodsetts	2.33	3.31

In addition to the above, three responses proposed the creation of a Parish Council within the Rawmarsh area, with one respondent suggesting that two Parish Councils could be established. However, no consistent proposal was put forward regarding the geographical extent or boundaries of any new parish area. Based on the proposals submitted,

the area under consideration would encompass an electorate of approximately 13,700.

Four responses proposed the creation of a Parish Council within the Wath upon Dearne area. However, the proposals varied considerably in terms of the geographical area that any new parish would cover, resulting in estimated electorates ranging from approximately 6,700 to 11,500.

Given the scale of the proposals, the differing views regarding the geographical extent of any new Parish areas, and the relatively limited level of support demonstrated through the consultation, the responses received did not provide sufficient evidence of community support to justify undertaking further consultation on the creation of a new Parish Council in either Rawmarsh or Wath upon Dearne as part of this review. Therefore, it was recommended that no further consideration be given to those proposals at this stage.

Subject to Cabinet approval, consultation on the draft recommendations would commence on 26th October 2026. To maximise opportunities for engagement with the draft recommendations, the duration of the consultation period would be twelve weeks. Although the consultation would span the Christmas period, the timetable had been designed to provide additional opportunity for participation during January 2027 before the consultation closed.

Following the second consultation stage, final recommendations would be prepared by the Officer Working Group and reported to Cabinet in Spring 2027, before being referred to Council for approval. Any approved changes would then be implemented through a Community Governance Order at the next scheduled elections in May 2028.

During the meeting it was confirmed that other representations, outside of the ones already covered in the report, would still be considered when formulating final recommendations. It was also agreed that the Electoral Services Manager would attend a Parish Councils Joint Working Group meeting to discuss the next steps of the Community Governance Review process.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the retention of the existing community governance arrangements for the following Parish, Town and Community Councils and Parish Meeting, and agrees that no further consultation is required. These arrangements will therefore be carried forward to the Final Recommendations Report:

a) Anston Parish Council
b) Brampton Bierlow Parish Council
c) Catcliffe Parish Council
d) Harthill-with-Woodall Parish Council
e) Hellaby Parish Council
f) Maltby Town Council
g) Thorpe Salvin Parish Council
h) Todwick Parish Council
i) Treeton Parish Council
j) Ulley Parish Council

2. Approves consultation with the affected Parish Councils and their electors to seek views on the revision of the number of council seats as outlined below:

    a) Aston-cum-Aughton Parish Council: An increase of three Council seats from 15 to 18
    b) Bramley Parish Council: An increase of one seat from 13 to 14
    c) Brinsworth Parish Council: An increase of three seats from 11 to 14
    d) Ravenfield Parish Council: An increase of two seats from 7 to 9
    e) Thrybergh Parish Council: A decrease of four seats from 15 to 11
    f) Thurcroft Parish Council: A decrease of five seats from 18 to 13
    g) Wales Parish Council: A decrease of two seats from 15 to 13
    h) Waverley Community Council: An increase of five seats from 7 to 12
    i) Whiston Parish Council: An increase of three seats from 9 to 12
    j) Wickersley Parish Council: A decrease of two seats from 16 to 14
    k) Woodsetts Parish Council: A decrease of one seat from 9 to 8.

3. Approves consultation with electors at Nos. 605, 607, 609 and 611 Retford Road, together with Aston-cum-Aughton and Orgreave Parish Councils to seek views on the transfer of the properties from Aston-cum-Aughton West Ward of Aston-cum-Aughton Parish Council to Orgreave Parish Council.

4. Approves consultation with residents of the Poppy Fields development, together with Bramley Parish Council and Ravenfield Parish Council, to inform consideration of whether the current Parish boundary remains appropriate or whether changes should be considered.

5. Approves consultation with electors in the BWA polling district, together with Brinsworth Parish Council, to inform consideration of whether the Brinsworth Parish Council boundary should be extended to include the BWA polling district.

6. Approves consultation with Dalton Parish Council and its electors to inform consideration of whether Dalton Parish Council should be renamed Dalton and Sunnyside Parish Council and the Parish Wards renamed to Sunnyside Ward, Dalton Ward, and Brecks Ward.

7. Approves consultation with electors residing in the Penny Hill area, together with Dinnington St John's Town Council and Firbeck Parish Council, to inform consideration of whether the properties within the Penny Hill area should remain within the Dinnington Town Ward of Dinnington St John's Town Council or be transferred to Firbeck Parish Council.

8. Approves consultation with electors within the Gildingwells Parish Meeting area regarding the future community governance arrangements for the Parish. The consultation should seek views on the following options:

   - Re-establishing the Parish Meeting
   - Merging Gildingwells Parish Meeting with Letwell Parish Council;
   - Merging Gildingwells Parish Meeting with Woodsetts Parish Council; and
   - Abolishing Gildingwells Parish Meeting

   In addition, consultation should be undertaken with Letwell Parish Council and Woodsetts Parish Council to seek their views on the potential merger options and the implications for effective and convenient local governance.

9. Approves consultation with electors within the Hooton Levitt Parish Meeting area regarding the future community governance arrangements for the Parish. The consultation should seek views on the following options:

   a) Re-establishing the Parish Meeting
   b) Merging Hooton Levitt Parish Meeting with Laughton-en-le-Morthen Parish Council;
   c) Abolishing Hooton Levitt Parish Meeting

   In addition, it is proposed that consultation is undertaken with Laughton-en-le Morthen Parish Council to seek their views on the potential merger options and the implications for effective and convenient local governance.

10. Approves consultation with electors residing in the Firsby area and within the Hooton Roberts Parish area, together with Ravenfield Parish Council, to seek their views on a proposal to transfer the Firsby area from Hooton Roberts Parish Meeting to Ravenfield Parish Council, or to retain the existing parish boundary arrangements.

11. Approves consultation with electors residing in the Thurcroft South Ward (Laughton Common), together with Laughton-en-le-Morthen Parish Council and Thurcroft Parish Council, to seek their views on the potential transfer of the Thurcroft South Ward of Thurcroft Parish

Council to Laughton-en-le Morthen Parish Council, or the retention of the existing Parish boundary arrangements.

12. Approves consultation with the electors of Nos. 11, 38 and 40 Reresby Park Close, together with Dalton and Thrybergh Parish Councils, on the potential transfer of these properties from Thrybergh South Ward of Thrybergh Parish Council to Dalton North Ward of Dalton Parish Council.

13. Approves consultation with Wentworth Parish Council and Parish electors, particularly those in Harley Ward, to seek their views on changing the name of Harley Ward to Harley and Hood Hill Ward.

14. Approves the commencement of a twelve-week public consultation on the draft recommendations set out in Recommendations 2-13 of this report.

15. Notes that a final recommendations report will be brought forward following the consultation on the draft recommendations. Cabinet will be asked to approve the final recommendations and recommend their adoption by Council in Spring 2027.

59. THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF TENANT ENGAGEMENT

Consideration was given to the report which presented the proposals to introduce a hybrid model for tenant engagement. The Council had outsourced a large proportion of its tenant engagement activity for Housing Services for many years. The initial term of the current contract was due to expire in March 2027. The report proposed an approach to build on the strong foundation of tenant engagement in the Borough through a more agile model which better met the diverse needs of tenants, the requirements of the new housing regulations, and the need to respond swiftly to the changing regulatory environment, as required.

Rotherham Council had a strong history of effective engagement with its tenants and residents and had worked with a local provider, RotherFed, to successfully deliver engagement activity across the Borough for approximately 17 years. The current contract's initial term was due to expire in March 2027. However, since the contract was last procured in 2023, there had been significant changes across the sector which focused on housing providers demonstrating how tenant feedback was heard, acted upon, and influenced decision making within Policy, service design and delivery and that the landlord must have a direct relationship with its tenant panels and groups. New expectations around this were set out in the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

Whilst the current contract had performed well, there were some limitations which had prevented the Council and RotherFed from having the flexibility needed to respond to the sector's changing requirements. These included data protection issues which reduced the current contract

provider's ability to carry out targeted engagement, and difficulties for the Council in evidencing clear outcomes due to an indirect relationship with tenants. It had also been challenging to provide clear evidence of how tenant views and feedback were used to shape and improve services.

Four options had been considered as part of the options appraisal, as detailed in Section 3 of the report:

a) Re-procure and outsource the tenant engagement (including tenant scrutiny) service externally via a full tender process from April 2027.
b) Introduce a hybrid model, with tenant engagement insourced and tenant scrutiny outsourced from April 2027.
c) Fully insource the tenant engagement (including tenant scrutiny) service from April 2027.
d) Extend the current contract for 12 months.

Option B (Hybrid Model) was the preferred option. This approach would bring most tenant engagement activity directly into Housing Services, strengthening accountability, oversight, visibility and alignment with the Tenant Engagement Framework, while retaining an externally delivered tenant scrutiny function to provide independence, specialist expertise and confidence in the rigour of scrutiny activity. This model provided the strongest overall response to the issues identified through the appraisal and offered the best balance between tenant confidence, regulatory assurance, service integration and deliverability.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the proposal to introduce a hybrid model, with tenant engagement insourced and tenant scrutiny outsourced from April 2027.

2. Approve the proposal to procure an external provider to manage and deliver a tenant scrutiny function.

60. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT - COMMISSIONED SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report which set out proposals for the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant, to provide accommodation with support, for people who were at risk of rough sleeping. The Government's National Plan to End Homelessness was published in December 2025 and aimed to make homelessness 'rare, brief and non-recurring'. As such it had provided a Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (HRSDAG) to local authorities to help prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, and support people at risk of losing their homes through local housing and support services.

The Council's Housing Strategy, agreed in 2025, and the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleep Strategy, agreed in 2026, shared these aims.

Rough sleeping continued to be prevalent in Rotherham. In 2025/26, 688 reports of rough sleeping were received, with 256 verified instances recorded. These verified instances did not equate to 256 unique individuals, as some people were reported multiple times while being supported over several months. During the same period, the Council's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Team supported 104 single people and 8 couples, including individuals who engaged with the Service on more than one occasion (again accounting for duplicate instances).

The Strategic Commissioning team had worked alongside Housing officers to undertake an analysis of need and demand, to formulate recommendations for the commissioned provision, including all commissioned provision funded under the grant. Those recommendations were:

- That the Rough Sleeper Initiative Accommodation Hub (RSI Hub) be recommissioned. Details on the RSI Hub were provided in paragraph 2.4 of the report. Feedback from stakeholders suggested that the size of the current provision was both manageable in terms of risks and complexity of residents and was meeting demand. The current contract value was £171,000 per annum; however, this had not been uplifted throughout the contract term (as dependent on a specific ring fenced grant) and there had been increased costs associated with the delivery of the Service. It was recommended,, therefore that this Service was procured with an increased budget of £200,000 per annum, funded from the HRSDAG. Whilst a maximum number of units would be set to enable the provider to manage risks associated, the exact number of units and contract value would be determined through the procurement process. The contract terms would enable the provider to seek an uplift to the contract at the point of extension in line with CPI.

- To re-commission the Single Dispersed Supported Accommodation and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme as a combined service. The accommodation would be dispersed across the Borough with visiting support from the provider that could be flexible according to need, but with at least one visit per week. This Service would be made more flexible to enable access for people within the rough sleeping cohort as well as single homeless people. This would relieve pressure on the current RSI accommodation hub, acting as a step down provision from the intensive onsite support. This provision was currently £230,854 per annum, £205,854 allocated through the HRSDAG. It was recommended that this Service be procured with a budget of £231,000 per annum, with an anticipation of approximately fifty units dispersed across the Borough in locations agreed by the Council during the tender process. The exact number of units and

contract value would be determined through the procurement process. The contract terms would enable the provider to seek an uplift to the contract at the point of extension in line with CPI. Further details on these two schemes were set out in paragraph 2.5 and 2.6 of the report.

- To procure a Rough Sleeper Accommodation Hub for Women. Operating in a similar way to the RSI Accommodation Hub for males, it was recommended that a 'women only' hub be established and procured with an annual budget of £208,000. Feedback from the market and key stakeholders suggested that this provision should be for approximately 5 units with a focus on trauma stabilisation. The Council would work with the successful provider to identify the right type and location, incorporating the views of women who had experienced homelessness, with the final decision being made by the Council as part of the procurement process.

A full breakdown of the budget allocations for each project was set out in paragraph 3.1.14.

Cabinet Members were pleased to support all of the recommendations, particularly the proposal to aimed at helping vulnerable women. The Leader welcomed the Government funding and thanked the Housing Service for the incredible work they did helping to prevent homelessness.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve the proposals to:

1. Re-procure the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Hub for a period of 3 years, with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years.

2. Re-procure dispersed accommodation with support for single people who are homeless, rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping for a period of 3 years, with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years.

3. Procure an Accommodation Hub specifically for women for a period of 3 years, with the option to extend up to a further 2 years.

61. DRAFT STREET TRADING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which introduced the Draft Street Trading Policy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report. It proposed a regulatory approach to street trading that would see the control, and promotion, of street trading achieved through the use of consents issued by the Council in accordance with a Street Trading Policy. Street traders were currently able to operate with minimal regulation and without appropriate consideration of the consequences of their activities on other local businesses (particularly those that trade from retail premises). In addition, the absence of a clear framework meant that the way that street

traders operated currently was not transparent, equitable or fair. In addition, the introduction of a street trading framework would allow well managed traders to develop and flourish, further supporting business growth and employment opportunities.

In order to introduce the framework, the Council had to first adopt Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. The adoption of this legislation, together with the introduction of a clear Street Trading Policy, would provide the Council with the framework to ensure that street trading was controlled, fair, appropriate and contributed to business growth throughout the Borough.

Cabinet was asked to authorise officers to commence a period of consultation in relation to the adoption of Schedule 4 and approve a draft Street Trading Policy which would be consulted on at the same time. The Street Trading Policy would allow the Council to ensure that trading took place in an appropriate manner and without adverse impact on the local community (for example by minimising nuisance and regulating the number and location of traders within an area). The Policy would also allow the Council to set out conditions and expectations that would apply to street traders, such as:

- the safety and suitability of trading units
- the standard of hygiene for traders selling food items
- waste disposal
- trading times and limitations on trading in certain areas
- background checks on traders.

The consultation would commence by the end of November 2026 and continue for an eight week period. A further report would be presented to Cabinet early in 2027 outlining the outcome of the consultation and making a final recommendation regarding the adoption of Schedule 4 and the introduction of a Borough-wide Street Trading Policy.

During the meeting, the Cabinet Member confirmed that a number of amendments had been made to the Policy following recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting held in July 2026. Clearer definitions had been provided and the rationale for why this Policy was required had been explained better. The report had since been re-considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve consultation to determine whether the Council should adopt Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982.

2. Approve consultation on the draft Street Trading Policy, as outlined in the report.

3. Note that, following consultation, a further report will be presented to Cabinet outlining the final recommendations regarding the adoption of Schedule 4 and the introduction of a Borough-wide Street Trading Policy.

62. LOCAL PLAN

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the commencement of preparation of a new Rotherham Local Plan in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. Government planning reforms introduced through the Regulations came into force on 25th March 2026. The Regulations required local planning authorities to prepare a new style Local Plan through a prescribed process including gateway assessments, statutory consultation stages and adoption within a 30 month plan making period, following an initial four month commencement phase.

Government guidance and the Regulations stated that the Local Planning Authority was required to submit and publish a 'Notice of Intention to Commence' (Regulation 19), submit and publish a Local Plan Timetable (Regulation 4 and 5) that would replace the Council's current Local Development Scheme, and undertake a scoping consultation (Regulation 20). These tasks had to be completed prior to the submission of a Gateway 1 self-assessment to the Planning Inspectorate. Subject to the successful outcome of the Gateway 1, the Council could proceed to the prescribed 30 month plan making process.

The Council had to commence preparation of a new Rotherham Local Plan and establish suitable governance arrangements to ensure delivery within the required timescales. The report sought approval of the Local Plan Timetable, attached at Appendix 1, establishment of a Local Plan Steering Group, the Terms of Reference for which were attached at Appendix 2, as well as delegated authority arrangements for procedural matters required throughout the Local Plan process to ensure that the Council could respond as necessary to the new streamlined plan making system.

Following a request from Councillor Allen during the meeting, it was confirmed that a Parish Council representative would be included on the membership for the Local Plan Steering Group and the Terms of Reference updated to reflect this.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the contents of this report and approve the commencement of preparation of a new Rotherham Local Plan in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

2. Approve the publication of the Local Plan Timetable attached at Appendix 1 and note that it supersedes the current Local Development Scheme timetable for the preparation of the new Local Plan.

3. Approve the publication of the formal 'Notice of Intention to Commence' by 30th October 2026, at the latest, in line with Regulation 19.

4. Approve the establishment of a Local Plan Steering Group in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 2, including the addition of a Parish Council representative to the Membership.

5. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy:

    - to approve updates to the Local Plan Timetable during plan preparation;
    - to approve, publish and submit all documents required for the statutory Scoping Stage (Regulation 20);
    - to approve publication and submission of documents required for Gateway 1 (Regulation 21); and
    - to approve the content and commencement of consultation on proposed plan content, draft vision and supporting evidence (Regulation 23).

6. Agree that Planning Board and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be updated and consulted at appropriate stages throughout plan preparation.

7. Agree to receive a further report as the Local Plan progresses towards plan content and evidence consultation (Regulation 23(1)(a)) and seeking approvals for subsequent stages - Gateways 2 (Regulation 26) and Gateway 3 (Regulation 31).

63. STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which sought authorisation to acquire a property in Rotherham Town Centre for the purposes of future regeneration. An opportunity had arisen to acquire a key property within

the Don Valley Corridor. The property proposed for acquisition had been the subject of previous masterplan and feasibility work, demonstrating the strategic value of the property for regeneration purposes. The property details, the estimated value and associated costs were set out in Appendix 1 (exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act).

Acquisition would enable the Council to secure control of the property while future development options were assessed. Those options could include refurbishment, redevelopment, reuse in conjunction with adjoining Council interests, or incorporation within a wider regeneration proposal.

The property was vacant and understood to require significant investment. Acquisition would therefore expose the Council to immediate holding, security, insurance, compliance and maintenance costs pending agreement and funding of any future use. The financial assessment at Appendix 1 included provision for the identified acquisition costs and an initial assessment of the potential property liabilities. Exempt Appendix 1 set out the proposed acquisition limit and made provision for associated purchase costs and essential initial property-management measures.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the acquisition of the property identified in Appendix 1 of the report submitted for future regeneration purposes.

2. Approve the use of the Capital Contingency Fund for the acquisition and associated costs, up to the maximum total financial limit set out in exempt Appendix 1.

3. Delegate authority to the Service Director for Property and Facilities Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, to agree the acquisition terms and complete the acquisition within the due-diligence requirements and financial limits contained in Appendix 1.

(Appendix 1 was exempt under Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

64. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

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

65. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Cabinet be held on 16th November 2026, commencing at 10.00 a.m.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Rotherham SEND Reform Plan

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

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

Report Author(s)
Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion
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Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report asks Cabinet to approve Rotherham's Local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reform Plan 2026–2029 and the Council's part in delivering it with health services, education settings, families, and other partners. The aim is simple: children and young people with SEND should get the right help earlier, be supported to learn and take part in their local community where this meets their needs and be better prepared for adult life.

Demand for support is growing quickly. Requests for Education, Health and Care needs assessments rose from 1,114 in 2024 to 1,556 in 2025, and the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) rose from 3,623 to 4,062. Current forecasts suggest there could be 5,564 EHCPs by 2029. If support does not change, this will put more pressure on children and families, schools, specialist places, and the funding available for high needs.

The Plan changes the focus from responding when needs have become more serious to providing help earlier. Schools and settings will have earlier access to specialist education and health advice through Experts at Hand. The Council will also increase inclusion-base places, improve accessibility, and make the steps for getting extra help clearer and more consistent.

Children and families should notice a practical difference: help sooner, better access to therapy and specialist advice, better attendance and participation, and more

opportunities for children to be supported successfully in local schools where this is right for them. The Plan, by 2029, aims to support 2,433 children with EHCPs in mainstream settings, up from 1,417, and increase inclusion-base places from 120 to 258. The aim is to keep special-school places broadly stable and reduce independent placements from 116 to 100. This is in addition to those placed in alternative provision, Post-16 settings and out of authority. Children and parents will be asked whether support is improving their experience. There is also a strong financial reason for change. Without reform, spending from the High Needs Block is forecast to reach £80.5m in 2028/29 and £85.5m in 2030/31. If the reforms work as planned, the model shows spending of £78m and £78.1m in those years. These are forecasts, not guaranteed savings. They depend on children receiving effective help earlier, more mainstream schools being able to meet needs, and enough suitable local places being available. During this period there is also an expected increase in funding to schools and the Council to support inclusion.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026–2029 and the Council's role in its delivery.

2. Endorse the strategic direction of travel towards earlier identification and intervention, stronger mainstream inclusion, increased local provision and a mature multi-agency Experts at Hand model.

3. Note the first-year delivery plan and associated performance, governance and risk-management arrangements set out within the Local SEND Reform Plan.

4. Note the financial strategy underpinning reform, including the 2026/27 Schools Block to High Needs Block transfer of 0.5%, equivalent to £1.3m, and the alignment of high-needs capital investment to mainstream accessibility, inclusion bases, specialist provision, and alternative provision.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 The Local SEND Reform Plan
Appendix 2 Glossary of Terms
Appendix 3 Part A – Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 4 Part B – Equality Analysis Form
Appendix 5 Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers
The Schools White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving
SEND reform consultation documentation
Schools Operational Guide 2026–2027
Local Partnership Maturity Assessment

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

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Rotherham SEND Reform Plan

1. Background

1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) asked every council to produce a local SEND reform plan by 19 June 2026, following the Schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving. Rotherham submitted its Plan and was told on 2 October 2026 that it had been approved.

1.2 Partners in Rotherham are ambitious for children and young people with SEND and intend to create a consistently inclusive 0–25 system in which needs are identified early, supported effectively, and met locally wherever possible. The Reform Plan has been shaped by the March 2026 Local Partnership Maturity Assessment and January 2026 SEND Self-Evaluation Framework, which identify increasingly mature partnership governance, co-production, joint commissioning and data capability, alongside further work required in frontline practice, mainstream inclusion, and workforce confidence.

1.3 The Reform Plan provides the partnership framework for turning that ambition into practice. This reform direction will also inform the Council's wider education strategy and its continuing relationship with all schools and settings (nursery schools, private, voluntary, and independent childcare providers, alternative provisions, and colleges).

1.4 The need for change is clear. Requests for an Education, Health and Care needs assessment rose from 1,114 in 2024 to 1,556 in 2025. EHCPs rose from 3,623 to 4,062 and are forecast to reach 5,564 by 2029. There are particular pressures linked to autism and speech, language, and communication needs. Waiting times for speech and language and occupational therapy and absence from education also remain challenges for children with SEND.

1.5 National and local reform is moving towards earlier help, stronger inclusion, and shared responsibility across services. Partners in Rotherham will bring specialist advice into schools and settings earlier, help mainstream settings build their skills and confidence, improve checks on quality, and make better use of local places and capital investment. The aim is to improve outcomes for children and families while making the SEND system more sustainable through supporting schools to meet the special educational needs of children within their existing resources.

1.6 The local area SEND Reform Plan deploys resources and structure to address the challenges within the existing national SEND system and begin to build a local SEND system that focuses on delivering improved outcomes for children, young people, and their families. The local area SEND reform plan is also a key plank in the development of a wider Rotherham education strategy that aims to improve the educational and life outcomes for all children.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The ambition is that children and young people get the right help at the right time. The Plan aims to identify needs earlier, provide support more consistently

and give children more opportunity to learn, belong and succeed in their local communities.

2.2 There is also a financial pressure. Without reform, High Needs Block spending is forecast to reach £80.5m in 2028/29 and £85.5m in 2030/31. With successful reform, the forecasts are £78m and £78.1m. The priority is better and earlier support for children. Reduced demand and lower future costs are expected to follow if the new approach, moving resources into schools, works.

2.3 The Plan aims to support more children successfully in mainstream education where this is appropriate for their needs. By 2029, children with EHCPs supported in mainstream settings are planned to rise from 1,417 to 2,433, and inclusion base places from 120 to 258. Special school placements are expected to remain broadly stable, moving from 1,221 to 1,246, while independent placements are planned to reduce from 116 to 100. This will be in addition to children placed in alternative provision, Post-16 placements and out-of-borough maintained or academy special schools.

2.4 Experts at Hand will be the main way of bringing specialist advice closer to children, families, and education settings. Instead of waiting until a child's needs have increased before seeking specialist help, schools and settings will be able to get earlier advice from a team including Educational Psychology, Specialist Teaching, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy. This should help staff in schools and settings understand needs, adapt support, and decide what further help is required. The aim is for all settings to have access to Experts at Hand by 2028/29 and the Plan includes actions to recruit and retain the necessary workforce.

2.5 The wider reform will make support clearer and more consistent. This includes better information for families, staff development, clearer routes to support and shared guidance on different levels of need. Progress will be judged by whether children and families say they are getting earlier, more consistent, and more effective help.

2.6 In practice, the reform means moving help closer to the child and providing it sooner. Mainstream settings will get more consistent access to specialist advice through Experts at Hand, while more inclusion base places and accessibility improvements will help more children stay successfully in local provision where this is right for them. Special schools and specialist provision will continue to be essential for children whose needs require them.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The DfE required the Council to prepare this Plan working with partners. The High Needs Stability Grant (to address historic Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits accumulated by local authorities up to 31 March 2026) is linked to approval of the 2025/26 local SEND reform plan, and any further support is linked to implementing this Plan and approval of the 2027/28 plan.

3.2 There are, however, two possible options.

3.2.1 Option 1 – Do not adopt the proposed reform approach. This would leave the partnership responding to rising demand through existing arrangements. The Plan's projections indicate continued growth in EHCPs and High Needs Block expenditure, with continuing pressure on specialist provision and services. This option would not address the identified variation in early support and mainstream confidence and is not recommended.

3.2.2 Option 2 - Approve and implement the Local SEND Reform Plan. This would provide a three-year plan for earlier help, inclusion, local provision, workforce development, co-production, data, quality, and financial sustainability. It includes clear delivery milestones, placement forecasts, financial modelling, and governance. This is the recommended option because it gives partners a shared framework, while allowing progress to be checked and the delivery approach to evolve if expected improvements are not being achieved.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Children, families, and partners have helped shape the Plan. Rotherham Parent Carer Forum contributed through 2,391 parent engagements, including feedback on EHCPs, therapies, waiting times and placements. Engagement has also taken place through the Best Start Summit, Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership, Place Board, multi-agency workshops and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision (SENDAP) partnership activity. This feedback has helped shape Experts at Hand and the wider priorities in the Plan.

4.2 Engagement will continue with children and young people, parents and carers, schools, early years settings, further education, health partners, the voluntary and community sector, elected members, Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service and other representative groups' views. A South Yorkshire memorandum of understanding between Local Authorities and the Integrated Care Board is also planned to support fair arrangements for children who attend provision across council boundaries.

4.3 Children and families will continue to help shape the work after the Plan is approved. The Parent Carer Forum are developing a tool to measure parental confidence and children's experience, alongside performance data, so that partners can see whether the reforms are making a real difference.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Delivery runs from 2026/27 to 2028/29. In the first year, the programme will start the implementation of Experts at Hand, design and test the first inclusion bases, progress accessibility and capital work, improve data and monitoring, agree ways to measure parental confidence, and develop clearer borough-wide routes to support.

5.2 The Service Director - Education & Inclusion is the Senior Responsible Officer for the Reform Plan. Progress will be reviewed every month by the SENDAP Strategic Partnership Board and every quarter by the SEND Executive. There will also be annual checks using data, Cabinet reporting on the CYPS Capital

Programme and the Local Area Reform Plan and the SEND Self-Evaluation Framework. This means problems can be identified, challenged, and escalated, and delivery can be changed where necessary.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 Historically, Rotherham has faced significant pressure within its High Needs Budget (HNB), driven by rising demand for SEND provision, including increases in the number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Council has managed the SEND demand and financial pressures over the last 5 years through the Safety Valve Programme (DfE recovery programme for local authorities with significant High Needs deficits, combining financial support with SEND system reform). Financial support previously provided through the Safety Valve Agreement ended in 2025/26, the final year of the programme.

6.2 The Government has replaced the former Safety Valve programme with the High Needs Stability Grant (HNSG), which provides support towards historic Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits accrued up to 31 March 2026 and forms part of the transition to a reformed SEND system. The continuation of the statutory override, which excludes DSG deficits from the Council's general fund position, remains in place until 31 March 2028. Following approval of Rotherham's Local SEND Reform Plan, the Council's 2025/26 HNSG allocation of £0.4m has been confirmed. Taking account of the latest DSG forecast and HNSG funding, the DSG Reserve is forecast to have a cumulative deficit of £10.4m by 31 March 2027, reinforcing the importance of delivering the SEND Reform Plan.

6.3 The Council submitted its Local SEND Reform Plan to the DfE by 19 June 2026, setting out how it will transition to the reformed SEND system and increase early intervention, inclusion, and mainstream capacity. The Plan demonstrates a clear pathway towards the Government's vision for a more inclusive SEND system.

6.4 The Government recognises that implementation will take time and that financial pressures are likely to continue during the transition period leading to a forecast £10.4m deficit in the DSG Reserve by 31 March 2027, as described in 6.2. It is expected that Stability Grant funding will continue during this transition. The Council will be required to maintain robust financial management while continuing to deliver appropriate, high-quality support for children and young people with SEND.

6.5 To support implementation, the Government has, nationally, committed £4bn of investment, including £1.6bn for mainstream schools, early years settings and colleges to strengthen inclusive practice, and £1.4bn for local authorities to provide specialist support through the Experts at Hand programme, including specialist teachers, educational psychologists and therapists. The Council has been allocated funding of £2.2m in 2026/27 for the delivery of the Experts at Hand (EAH) model across schools in Rotherham as well as a High Needs Capital Allocation of £3.4m, with proposed priorities including

mainstream accessibility, special-school accessibility, inclusion-base development and special school growth.

6.6 There are no immediate procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. To support the delivery of the report, if there is a need to commission and contract with external third party providers, these must be procured in compliance with relevant procurement legislation (Procurement Act 2023, Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023) dependent on requirement and route to market, as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The proposed reforms support the Council in complying with its Statutory Duties in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014, The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 and the associated SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years.

7.2 There is a significant risk of legal challenge in the event that the Council fails to meet its Statutory Duties, which could be by way of Judicial Review proceedings, Appeal proceedings to the SEND Tribunal or via the complaints process which may result in complaints being raised to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

7.3 Extensive co-production has shaped the plan; the Reform Plan is a partnership framework covering education, health, and care. It requires formal sign-off by specified local authority and Integrated Care Board (ICB) leaders and establishes governance for delivery across organisational boundaries. Legal implications arising from specific implementation decisions, commissioning arrangements, information sharing, capital schemes, or changes to provision will need to be addressed through the relevant decision and assurance processes.

7.4 The Cabinet decision sought is to approve the Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029 and the Council's role in its delivery, endorse its strategic direction and associated financial approach, and note the first-year delivery, performance, governance, and risk management arrangements.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Workforce capacity is a critical dependency and one of the Plan's highest-rated implementation risks. The proposed Experts at Hand model requires Educational Psychology, specialist teaching, therapy, and programme capacity, supported by joint ICB recruitment, commissioning, and workforce planning. Recruitment and retention challenges within specialist SEND professions may impact the pace of implementation and achievement of intended outcomes.

8.2 The first-year plan includes recruitment to the multi-disciplinary team of educational psychologist, specialist teacher, speech and language therapists,

and occupation therapists, and additional programme management and performance capacity. Any employment, establishment or workforce-change implications will need to follow the Council's usual HR and partnership processes, including appropriate consultation and employee engagement arrangements.

8.3 Successful delivery of the Plan will require investment in workforce development across education, health, and Council services to strengthen confidence and capability in supporting children and young people with SEND. Workforce development requirements are incorporated into delivery planning and monitored through programme governance arrangements.

8.4 Workforce wellbeing, workload management, recruitment, and retention will continue to be monitored throughout implementation, particularly in specialist services where capacity constraints could impact delivery of reform objectives and anticipated benefits realisation.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Plan is intended to improve support for children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND and their families. It aims to identify needs sooner, improve access to different types of specialist help, strengthen inclusion, improve attendance and participation, increase suitable local placements and support better preparation for adult life.

9.2 The Plan also focuses on reducing persistent and severe absence and exclusions, improving access to therapy, and increasing participation in education, employment, or training. Children's views and parental confidence will be used alongside performance information to judge whether the reforms are working.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Plan is explicitly concerned with improving equity of access and reducing variation in the support experienced by children and young people with SEND. Expansion of inclusive mainstream provision, accessibility investment, consistent pathways, and an equitable Experts at Hand offer are intended to reduce inequity between settings and localities.

10.2 Equalities Impact Assessment has been included as Appendix 3 and 4.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 The source Plan does not quantify carbon impacts. It does, however, intend to increase local provision and reduce reliance on distant specialist placements, which may affect travel patterns for children and young people. A travel impact assessment is included within the capital and sufficiency programme.

11.2 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been included as Appendix 5.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The Council cannot deliver the Plan alone. Education, health, social care, and other partners will need to work together so that needs are identified earlier, schools and settings are better able to include children, and specialist advice is available sooner. Partners will therefore need to share responsibility for changing practice, staffing and the way resources are used. The Plan is co-signed by representatives from NHS South Yorkshire ICB and Rotherham Council.

12.2 For schools, early years providers and Post-16 settings, the reform brings both more support and a stronger expectation of inclusion. Settings will receive clearer guidance, professional development, earlier specialist advice, and more inclusive capacity, including additional inclusion bases. In return, the aim is for more children to have their needs met effectively in mainstream and local provision where appropriate. Specialist provision will remain essential for children who need it.

12.3 For health and specialist services, Experts at Hand changes how advice is provided. Educational Psychology, Specialist Teaching, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy will work as a more joined-up team, giving settings earlier advice as part of the graduated response. This will require shared planning on staffing, commissioning and pathways, and progress will depend on having enough specialist staff.

12.4 The Plan gives partners shared responsibility for managing rising demand and building capacity. Growth in statutory assessments, pressure on specialist places and increasing High Needs costs cannot be solved simply by adding more specialist placements. Partners have committed to strengthen early support and inclusive practice. Any reduction in demand or cost will depend on these service improvements being delivered successfully.

12.5 Taken together, the reforms are a major change in how the partnership between RMBC, schools, settings and the health system works. The aim is to move from specialist help that often arrives after needs have increased to help that is available earlier around the child, family, and education setting. Children must still receive the provision appropriate to their assessed needs, and each organisation will keep its own legal responsibilities.

12.6 Partnership governance will keep organisations jointly accountable for delivery. The SENDAP Strategic Partnership Board will review progress monthly and the SEND Executive quarterly. They will look at delivery, staffing, outcomes and family experience, demand, placements, and finances, and will act when progress is off track. Decisions that need formal approval will still go through the responsible organisation’s normal governance process.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The Plan identifies five main risks to delivery. These will be tracked through the programme risk, action, issue, and decision arrangements, reviewed

monthly by the SENDAP Strategic Partnership Board, and escalated through partnership and Council governance where necessary.

13.2

Risk	Impact / Likelihood	Plan mitigation	Management route
Not enough specialist staff can be recruited or retained	4 / 5	Joint Council/ICB recruitment, group working models and commissioning	Programme risk log and partnership governance
New inclusion bases open later than planned	3 / 4	Early feasibility work, agreements with trusts and travel impact assessment	Capital and sufficiency workstream
Early support is not consistent across settings	4 / 5	Agreed core offer, quality checks, and Specialist Inclusion Team outreach	Practice, pathways and quality assurance
Costs are higher than the financial plan assumes	4 / 5	Challenge commissioning costs, increase local capacity and strengthen routes into adulthood	Financial monitoring and governance
Information is incomplete or arrives too late	3 / 3	One shared dashboard, common definitions, regular quality checks, and training	Performance and data workstream

13.3 The two most important enablers are having enough specialist staff and making sure early support works consistently across settings. If either fails, the expected changes in demand, placements and spending may not happen. Financial benefits will therefore be treated as a result of better services, not as a separate savings target.

13.4 If monitoring shows that delivery, outcomes, or financial assumptions are off track, the programme will agree corrective action. Any change that affects an approved budget, policy or provision will go through the Council's normal decision-making process.

14. Accountable Officers

Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	16/10/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	20/10/26

Report Author: Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion
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This report is published on the Council's website.

Annex A: Local SEND Reform Plan

Developing a Local SEND Reform Plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundation for reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context. A shared plan which focuses on co-designing the local approach as system partners and with children, young people and families will help foster collective responsibility for delivering the reforms.

It is critical that all system partners, including health, education and childcare settings, work together to design and deliver the Local SEND Reform Plan, under the local authority's leadership. It is also crucial that representative family carers e.g. the local Parent Carer Forum, are involved in the development of the plan.

The expectation is that this plan is discussed, agreed, and signed off at your relevant SEND Governance Board. As a minimum, the plan must be formally signed off by the Local Authority Chief Executive (CEO), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Chief Executive, the Local Authority Director of Children's Service (DCS), the Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director, and the Local Authority Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Section 151 Officer). We encourage other colleagues and partners who have contributed to also review and sign-off the plan, particularly early years, school, college and trust leaders.

Name of Local Authority: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Name of Integrated Care Board: NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board

Local SEND Reform Plan SRO: Niall Devlin, Service Director – Education & Inclusion

Signatories

Role	Name	Signature	Email contact	Date
Service Director, Education and Inclusion	Niall Devlin		niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk	19.06.2026
Director of Partnerships/ Deputy Place Director (Rotherham Place)	Claire Smith		claire.smith138@nhs.net	19.06.2026
Executive Director Children & Young Peoples Services	Nicola Curley		nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk	19.06.2026
Chief Executive, NHS South Yorkshire ICB	Chris Edwards		christopher.edwards7@nhs.net	19.06.2026
Section 151 Officer, Rotherham Council	Judith Badger		judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk	19.06.2026
Chief Executive, Rotherham Council	John Edwards		john.edwards@rotherham.gov.uk	19.06.2026

Executive Summary

A brief summary of your local system 'change story' – your local context, where you are now, where you want to get to in the next 3 years, how you know you are succeeding and how you will know you have achieved your vision for the next 3 years. Please include a brief qualitative summary. This summary should also include your assessment of current and forecast performance against the headline metrics.

Please structure your 'change story' using the following aims:

- *Build a 0-25 system where children and young people receive support to achieve and thrive through (a) more inclusive settings and (b) stronger local partnerships*
- *Improve capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce to identify and meet need*
- *Improve confidence of children, families, and stakeholders in reform and readiness of the system*
- *Stabilise finances and improve value for money*

Rotherham's SEND Reform Plan sets out a system-wide transformation to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

This Plan has been explicitly shaped by the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment (March 2026) and the SEND Self-Evaluation Framework (January 2026). These confirm Rotherham has an increasingly mature, effective partnership, with strong governance, co-production, joint commissioning and data capability. However, there is more to be done in frontline practice, mainstream inclusion and workforce confidence and consistency.

The need for reform is driven by sustained growth in demand, increasing complexity of need, and rising financial pressure.

Demand for statutory support continues to increase significantly. Requests for assessment increased from 1,114 (2024) to 1,556 (2025) and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increased from 3,623 (2024) to 4,062 (2025). They are projected to reach 5,564 by 2029 (37%).

Demand is particularly concentrated in:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): 1,559 cases
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN): 865 cases (up from 645)

High demand for speech and language and occupational therapies is resulting in significant waiting times with children seen within 18 weeks reducing from 77.7% in 23/24 to 47.4% in 24/25 for SALT and from 44.1% in 23/24 to 43.4% in 24/25 for OT.

Stakeholders report that Emotionally Based School Avoidance is increasing and severe absence has increased for children with EHCPs

from 10.3% in 23/24 to 11.3% in 24/25 and for SEN Support from 4.4% in 23/24 to 4.8% in 24/25.

By 2029, the system will support more children and young people to achieve and thrive; expanded inclusion bases will create more inclusive settings, and we will maximise the strength of our local partnerships to ensure accountability through improved quality assurance.

This will mean a clear structural shift in the system to ensure that:

- EHCPs in mainstream settings increase from 1,417 to 2,433 (+72%)
- Inclusion bases expand from 120 to 258 places (+115%)
- Special school placements remain broadly stable (1,221 → 1,246)
- Independent placements reduce from 116 to 100 (-14%)
- Waiting times reduce so 70% of children are seen within 18 weeks (+20%)

Financially, unmitigated High Needs Block expenditure is projected to increase from £62.98m to £80.5m in 2028/29 and £85.5m in 2030/31 due to the rate of demand growth. Successful delivery of this reform plan would see projected High Needs Block expenditure at £78m in 2028/29 and £78.1m in 2030/31 demonstrating that the programme is bending the cost curve through system redesign.

Mainstream provision provides ten times greater value for money than independent placements, underlining the importance of shifting provision locally. Capital investment is aligned to this approach, with targeted accessibility investment in mainstream settings to continue to shift placement patterns and specialist capacity increasing minimally from 2,003 to 2,164 places.

We will tilt the system decisively towards earlier help in mainstream settings with a rebalancing of provision so that mainstream education becomes the primary setting for meeting need, supported by targeted specialist input. A central mechanism for delivering this change is the Experts at Hand (EAH) model, which provides consultation-based, multidisciplinary support to settings improving capacity and capability. This shifts specialist expertise earlier in the system and reduces reliance on statutory escalation. This will be evidenced by increases in children supported without EHCPs:

- Educational Psychology: 1,027 → 1,562 (+52%)
- Speech and Language Therapy: 1,489 → 1,713
- Occupational Therapy: 238 → 329

A co-produced quality assurance framework with new measures for parental confidence and children's experience will supplement our performance and monitoring arrangements to ensure we track progress and impact. Effective communication and responsive leadership will ensure we focus on what matters to children, families and stakeholders improving confidence and readiness of the system.

Section 1 – Vision and Goals

1. **What the local area partnership is trying to achieve?**
   Please set out your goals for your local system. These should be clear, aligned to the vision set out in the Schools White Paper, small in number and measurable. These goals should include clear reference to:
   - *Outcomes for children*
   - *Confidence of parents, carers and young people in the system*
   - *Management of finances to secure value for money*

Rotherham is just as ambitious for children and young people with SEND as for every other child. The partnership's vision is to deliver a consistently inclusive 0–25 system where needs are identified early, supported effectively, and met locally wherever possible so that every child achieves their potential.

Four strategic goals, linked to co-produced outcomes underpin this ambition so that by 2029 we:

- **Improve early identification and access through timely multi-disciplinary support**
  100% coverage of Experts-at-Hand means the % of children educated in mainstream settings increases so at least 70% of the SEND cohort will be SEND Support and 70% of CYP access therapies within 18 weeks.

- **Strengthen inclusive practice by reducing absence, exclusions and variation, while improving attendance and participation**.
  Delivery of a shared expectations framework, clear pathways and accessible CPD means children experience reduced variation in inclusive practice so 73.3% of children achieve GLD, persistent absence rate (EHCP cohort) reduces to ≤35%, severe absence rate (EHCP cohort) reduces to ≤10%, persistent absence rate (SEN Support) reduces ≤28%, severe absence rate (SEN Support) reduces to ≤4.5%, suspension rates for SEND reduce to ≤55% and permanent exclusion for SEND reduces to ≤65%.

- **Re-shape demand through co-production and improved confidence in the system.**
  Co-produced QA, SEND dashboards and "inclusion insights report" create one shared view of demand and capacity, informing transparent challenge and efficient use of resources so a new parental confidence measure demonstrates improvement, EHCP growth reduces to 6% and ISP usage reduces to ≤2, reducing ISP spend growth.

- **Develop strong local provision, mainstream capacity and system accountability**
  Inclusion bases strengthen mainstream capability, placement stability and reintegration. Special school capacity used strategically for the most complex needs so the % EHCP cohort in mainstream and inclusion base provision increases to ≥40%, achieving value for money through maximisation of cost-efficient places.
  Please see Appendix: VG01 – Vision and Goals Target Metrics.

Section 2 – Strategy

2. Where the local area partnership expects to be in the next 3 years

A description of what your local system would look like in the next 3 years in line with the national vision set out in the Schools White Paper and set within the context of where you are starting from as a local system.

In particular, as commissioning system partners, you should reflect on and agree what your fully fledged ***Experts At Hand Offer*** *model should be and how this will be deployed via mainstream settings and providers (including those not based in your area – e.g. further education colleges attended by your young people) to build their capacity as well as identify and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and without the need for a statutory assessment for Education, Health and Care.*

To help you fully consider the scope and scale of change required, you may find it useful to structure your response using these 4 building blocks of an inclusive system, reflecting on what is working well in your system, what you are most worried about, what needs to change, and how the enablers will help you achieve your 3 year vision.

When summarising where your local area partnership currently is, please include an assessment of where you are in reference to the core minimum requirements above and how you bridge the gap, making reference to and attaching additional documents that provide underlying evidence for your summary.

Strengthening inclusion across education settings– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

Access to specialist support and local placements – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

Our strategy is aligned with the Schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, Best Start in Life, Neighbourhood Health and the Families First Partnership Transformation Programme. We have worked in equal partnership on our maturity assessment, ensuring this reflects an accurate position on the strengths and areas for development, operational and strategic challenges across the health and education (all sectors) landscape. Our SEND reform plan is built on learning from innovation and the work already underway in our early years provisions, schools, academies and colleges, e.g. Partnership for Improvement of Neurodiversity (PINS), Education led Multi-agency Neuro-developmental pathway, 0-19 early identification and SEND support team.

We have set out our vision for a mature multi-agency Experts-at-Hand model ensuring fair and equitable access through our enhanced non-traded Specialist Inclusion Team offer. This has been shaped by our learning from co-production with children, young people and local partners, and is informed by evidence from the national Change Programme and What Works in SEND. More detail can be found in Appendix: S02 – Experts at Hand (EAH) Offer – Rotherham.

To ensure delivery of our ambition, vision and goals, we will continue activity to improve pathways; scale inclusion bases across phases; deliver high quality and impactful workforce development; strengthen performance, quality assurance and governance; and use special school capacity strategically for the most complex needs.

Where we are	Local blueprint for the next 3 years	Where we will be in the next 3 years
The SEND Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) highlights that escalation into statutory processes is often driven by inconsistent access to early, joined-up support and variation in school confidence when concerns first arise. The Maturity Assessment indicates that the partnership is well placed to standardise early multi-disciplinary team (MDT) support, moving away from informal and inconsistent routes. Earlier, reliable intervention is essential to moderating demand and improving outcomes. Without action, demand for EHCPs will	Building blocks <u>Strengthening inclusion across education settings</u> Inclusion Bases “Inclusion Bases” are a new collective term for specialist provision located within mainstream education settings. Support Bases are flexible, school-led inclusion hubs that provide structured, targeted intervention while keeping pupils fully connected to mainstream education (children placed by school, funded by the school). Specialist Bases are locally planned, high-expertise provision within mainstream	Inclusion bases will be scaled across phases to meet local need clusters, strengthening mainstream capacity and reducing reliance on distant specialist placements. Clear entry and exit criteria will ensure these provisions support reintegration and build mainstream capability.

continue to rise, waiting times for services will increase, more children will be out of school (severely or persistently absent) or require ISP provision to meet their needs, Fewer young people will progress into employment, training and further education (EET). While the SEF evidences strong leadership and high-quality co-production, it also identifies variability in inclusive practice, particularly within mainstream settings. The Maturity Assessment confirms that governance, data and relationships are sufficiently robust to move from guidance to clearer expectations and accountability. Reducing this variation is critical to improving equity and inclusion. Increasing complexity of need, alongside pressure on specialist provision and attendance, is evident. However, sufficiency data shows that many needs could be met locally with the right support. The partnership is now in a position to use inclusion bases strategically to strengthen mainstream provision, rather than as standalone alternatives. Attendance, persistent absence and exclusion remain key challenges for children and young people with SEND. These issues drive poorer outcomes and increase parental anxiety and escalation, making them a central focus for improvement.	schools, offering an alternative to special schools while maintaining strong links to mainstream education (EHCP children placed by LA, commissioned by LA). <u>Capital</u> The approved Capital Investment Strategy (July 2026) includes improving accessibility across education settings. This will support development of inclusion bases aligned with co-produced criteria. <u>Access to specialist support and local placements</u> EAH Experts At Hand will be delivered through a local authority led, jointly commissioned model, with shared ownership between Rotherham Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Delivery will be undertaken through **multi-disciplinary** teams (MDTs), bringing together specialist education and health expertise. Access to Experts at Hand is consultation based rather than referral led. Deployment is informed by system wide data, and measures of parental confidence. EAH will support **consultation-based** work, workforce development and system level problem solving. Specialist Teachers form the core delivery workforce and operate at setting	Over the next three years, Rotherham will establish a mature, co-produced, multi-agency Experts at Hand (EAH) model spanning Early Years, primary, secondary and Further Education, ensuring equitable access across all localities. This model will enable earlier access to support when concerns first arise, strengthening school confidence in meeting children's needs and embedding a more consistent and inclusive system. Delivery will be coordinated through multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs), bringing together specialist education and health expertise, including Educational Psychology, Specialist Teaching, special school and alternative provision outreach, Speech and Language Therapy, and Occupational Therapy. These

Strong data and performance systems are in place, and the partnership is capable of using this intelligence to drive change. Benchmarking data (including financial data) could be improved to include more measures providing better evidence of value for money. Financial data collected (e.g. the unit cost information for SEN provision including EHCP/ special/ ISP) is not explicitly visible and benchmarked. Sustained focus on moderating demand, strengthening governance and ensuring inclusive engagement will be essential to securing long-term system improvement and better outcomes for children and families.	and trust level, with advanced practice strands aligned to key areas of need, including speech and language, sensory and motor needs, and emotional regulation. These roles work closely with health professionals to translate clinical expertise into sustainable educational practice. Enablers <u>Co-production / Engagement – Experts at Hand (EAH)</u> Feedback from Rotherham Parent Carer Forum (RPCF), including 2,391 parent engagements, has shaped the Experts at Hand model, reflecting priorities such as EHCPs, access to therapies, assessment waiting times and education placements. Insights from the Best Start Summit (December 2025), Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership (RESP), Place Board (health and care partners) and multi-agency workshops (February 2026) further informed development, particularly around confidence, workforce capability and therapy access. A summit hosted by the RPCF in April approved the local area maturity assessment and defined the key principles of Experts at Hand. As soon as recruitment allows, the proposed model will be piloted around a specific need/ location dependent upon recruitment and capacity. Dynamic review of EAH Offer will take place throughout. The SENDAP partnership board will receive feedback from all stakeholders following implementation in line with Rotherham's learning culture. The	teams will operate under formal partnership agreements with shared performance expectations. Support will be delivered directly into education settings, with a focus on workforce capability, environmental adaptation and inclusive practice, rather than reliance on individualised provision. EAH will be consultation-based rather than referral-led. Settings will access support through professional dialogue focused on their context, priorities and capacity to meet needs. MDTs will then determine the most appropriate response, which may include whole-setting support, group interventions, coaching or modelling. Individual observation or assessment will be used selectively to inform practice but will not lead to ongoing provision. EAH will not act as a gateway to statutory assessment, nor duplicate wider family support, social care or mental health services, instead aligning with existing pathways such as Family Help and health services. Senior Educational Psychologists will provide strategic leadership, supporting consultation-based practice, workforce development and system-level problem solving. Specialist Teachers will form the core delivery workforce, working across settings and trusts, with advanced expertise in priority areas such as speech and language, sensory and motor needs, and emotional regulation. A regional Speech and Language Therapy

	operating procedures will be reviewed to ensure the model is scalable and agile. <u>System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production</u> Data Improve consistency in school-level data quality and primary need identification. Strengthen integration of health data and SEND dashboards. Enhance tracking of vulnerable groups and resource use across mainstream, AP and specialist settings extended to Early Years and Post 16. Develop “insights” report to share data with schools. Align commissioning, capital and data to local need so that there is one shared view of demand and capacity. <u>QA</u> A co-produced quality assurance framework will include unique child voice and measures of parental confidence. These will be incorporated into the inclusion insights report. <u>Co-production</u> Increase reach and consistency. <u>Governance/ Escalation</u> Effective contract negotiation and challenge via commissioning. Clear escalation process across education,	Advanced Practitioner will ensure quality, sustainability and alignment with national expectations. A South Yorkshire MOU will ensure equitable access to Experts at Hand for cross-border children. The Specialist Inclusion Team will be enhanced to deliver this MDT approach. Improved system intelligence, including SEND dashboards, health data and setting-level information, will inform commissioning, resource allocation and transparent challenge. Communication with education providers will be strengthened through regular reporting on key inclusion measures, such as attendance, exclusions and EHCP performance. Improved use of benchmarking data and visibility of unit cost information will improve decision making and provision to ensure value for money. A co-produced quality assurance framework will incorporate child voice and parental confidence, alongside strengthened participation from diverse communities. The Four Cornerstones model will be embedded across all settings, supported by improved engagement with Early Years and Post-16 providers. Regular SEND Quality Checks with schools will provide clear challenge and support to improve

	health and LA. Enablers <u>Data / Digital Systems</u> Enhanced analytical capacity, improved reporting and a new education management system will improve data sharing and decision-making across the system <u>Quality Assurance</u> RPCF will co-produce a quality assurance framework focused on parental confidence and child experience, ensuring broader representation across SEND communities <u>Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours</u> Threshold of Need and Graduated response: quality assurance cycles will explicitly demonstrate fidelity to the graduated response and Threshold of Need Pathways: co-production of reviewed and improved pathways for support for EBSA, EHE and PfA. Enablers <u>Workforce</u> The workforce has actively influenced the plan. Increased capacity in Educational Psychology, therapies and specialist teaching will strengthen confidence. Co-produced thresholds and a clear graduated response will support consistent	practice. Effective commissioning will ensure value for money. Clear escalation process ensures accountability across education, health and LA. The enhanced Specialist Inclusion Team and MDT approach, in addition to QA, is supporting fidelity to the co-produced Threshold of Need and shared expectations framework for the graduated response across all phases. Earlier identification and stronger pathways between health, Early Years, education and the Child Development Centre will improve outcomes, including communication, language and literacy development and increasing the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development. A recruitment and retention plan led by advanced practitioners is ensuring availability of key roles including Education Psychologists, experienced Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language therapists. Historic barriers to CPD engagement outside

	practice, while barriers to CPD, such as limited INSET time, will be addressed. .	INSET days and QA and performance activity inform CPD offer. Engagement and impact are consistently positive and workers report increased confidence in practice. This will improve consistency, reduce variability in decision-making and ensure that ordinarily available provision meets SEND needs. Overall, this approach will reduce variation in inclusive practice, improve placement stability, and support more children and young people with SEND to thrive within mainstream education.
Baseline ***(outline the baseline for your success measures reflecting where you are now – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)*** ***Persistent absence (EHCP cohort) 39%*** ***Severe absence (EHCP cohort) 11.3%*** ***Suspension rates for SEND 61.5%*** ***ISP 4.9% (EHCP Cohort)*** ***0% coverage achieved (EAH)*** ***EET 83.9%*** ***SALT: 59.8%*** ***OT: 45.1%*** ***SEND Support is 68% of SEND cohort*** ***Tribunal appeal rate is 2.41***	Success measures *Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template E.g.* *Reduce persistent absence (EHCP cohort) from 39% to ≤35%* *Reduce suspension rates for SEND (50%)* *Reduce reliance on independent special school places* *Mainstream settings with increased access to Educational Psychologists/SaLT/OT* *Increase EET rates for SEND YP* *Improved access to therapies* *Increase children with SEN in mainstream* *Reduced tribunal appeal rate*	*Target Metrics (outline the target metrics that will demonstrate you have achieved the vision summarized above – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)* *Persistent absence (EHCP cohort) ≤35.5%* *Severe absence (EHCP cohort) reduces to ≤10%* *To be aligned with national suspension rates for SEND (50%)* Persistent absence rate (SEN Support) reduces ≤28%, Severe absence rate (SEN Support) reduces to ≤4.5% *(ISP) to ≤2% of EHCP cohort* *100% coverage achieved (EAH)* *EET 87.0%)* *SALT 70%* *OT 70%* *SEND Support is at least 70% of SEND Cohort* *Tribunal appeal rate reduces to 2.35*

Please see Appendix: S01 – Detailed 3-year blueprint.
Please see Appendix: S02 – Experts at Hand (EAH) Offer – Rotherham

3. What is the local area partnership's strategy for delivering on the above?

A brief summary of your local system's theory of change or reform strategy. Reflect on the output of your ***Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool****, particularly your Local System 'change story.'*

Rotherham's theory of change is set out in **Appendix S03 – a. Detailed Theory of Change** and illustrated in the accompanying diagram Appendix **S03 – b. Theory of Change Diagram**, it explains how Rotherham will move from a system under pressure to one that is inclusive, consistent and sustainable.

Rising EHCP demand, poor attendance/ engagement, variable outcomes and pressure on specialist provision are driven by inconsistent early support, differences in school confidence, and uneven access to services which impact parent confidence and children's experiences. In response, the model prioritises earlier intervention and stronger mainstream capacity.

Through the Experts at Hand model, multi-disciplinary support is deployed at the point concerns first emerge, enabling schools to respond more confidently and consistently without escalation. This is reinforced by a shared Threshold of Need and a consistently applied graduated response, alongside inclusion bases, workforce development, and coordinated co-produced quality assurance measuring parental confidence and children's experiences. **Appendix: S04 - Rotherham Reform Priorities Key Activities** provides additional detail about how this will be delivered**.** The strategic logic is that if needs are met earlier, locally and consistently, then reliance on (and preference for) statutory processes will eventually reduce. Aligning commissioning, capital investment and data to a single view of demand ensures resources are targeted effectively and system behaviour shifts from reacting to demand to shaping it.

In the short to medium term, this leads to improved confidence, reduced escalation, reduced tribunal appeals and more children supported in mainstream settings. Over time, it delivers better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, stabilised costs, and a resilient, inclusive system.

Appendix S03 – a. Detailed Theory of Change and illustrated in the accompanying diagram

Appendix S03 – b. Theory of Change Diagram,

Appendix: S04 - Rotherham Reform Priorities Key Activities

4. **Please upload a completed copy of the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool.**
   Included in the commission pack

5. **What is the local area partnership roadmap for the next 3 years?**
   Reflecting on the broad timescales and expectation for deliverables set out in the Schools White Paper, key documents and core minimum requirements set out in this document, please provide a high-level roadmap for the next 3 years. Please highlight key milestones and a trajectory to the target metrics identified above, including leading indicators.

   In the 2026-27 column, in particular, please reference how you plan to meet the core minimum requirements in your narrative, including details and evidence in supporting documents.

   You can insert or upload supporting documents including graphics/visuals that illustrate your data trajectory.

Local roadmap for the next 3 years	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Building blocks *Strengthening inclusion across education settings* *Inclusion Support Bases and Specialist Bases* *Access to specialist support and local placements* *EAH* *System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production* *Data* *QA* *Co-production* *Governance/ Escalation* *Encouraging inclusive culture and behaviours* *Threshold of Need and Graduated response* *Pathways* ***Enablers***	***EAH coverage & standards*** *Co-produce operating standards* *Recruit initial multi-disciplinary Team* *Identify pilot theme/ area.* *Deploy first EAH offer.* ***Inclusion bases*** *Design first wave (EY/primary/secondary/FE)* *Develop curriculum access model.* *Open a test site*	***EAH coverage & standards*** *Fully recruit to MDT. Scale EAH coverage.* *Dynamic review via SENDAP partnership Board including RPCF.* *Develop and embed outcomes framework.* ***Inclusion bases*** *Open second wave sites* *Embed curriculum access model (EY/primary/secondary/FE)* *Quality assure provision* *Dynamic review*	***EAH coverage & standards*** *Full EAH coverage* *Independent review* *Recommendations considered/ agreed at SENDAP partnership Board including RPCF* ***Inclusion bases*** *Open third wave sites* *Optimise flows* *SEN2 trajectory shows shift to increased mainstream/ SEN Support* *Quality assure provision* *Dynamic review*

Co-production / Engagement – Experts at Hand (EAH) *Feedback from Rotherham Parent Carer Forum (RPCF), including 2,391 parent engagements, has shaped the Experts at Hand model, reflecting priorities such as EHCPs, access to therapies, assessment waiting times and education placements. Insights from the Best Start Summit (December 2025) and multi-agency workshops (February 2026) further informed development, particularly around early years confidence, workforce capability and therapy access. Final proposals were co-produced with partners at the SENDAP Summit (March 2026).* *As soon as recruitment allows the proposed model will be piloted around a specific need/ location dependent upon recruitment and capacity. Dynamic review of EAH Offer will take place throughout. The SENDAP partnership board will receive feedback from all stakeholders following implementation in line with Rotherham's learning culture. The operating procedures will be reviewed to ensure the model is scalable and agile.* ***Workforce*** *The workforce has actively influenced the plan. Increased capacity in Educational Psychology, therapies and specialist teaching*	***Practice & pathways*** *(EBSA, ASD, SLCN, SEMH)* *Launch boroughwide graduated pathways.* *Agree revised (more accessible) CPD offer for 27/28.* ***Capital & sufficiency*** *Agree pipeline & travel impact assessment*	***Practice & pathways*** *Deepen fidelity* *Dynamic review of pathways* *Reduce suspensions/exclusions* *Deliver and evaluate revised (more accessible) CPD offer, develop offer for 28/29.* ***Capital & sufficiency*** *Publish annual Capital programme*	***Practice & pathways*** *Reduce suspensions/exclusions* *Consolidate review and publish impact* *Deliver and evaluate CPD offer for 28/29, develop offer for 29/30* ***Capital & sufficiency*** *Complete agreed pipeline* *Publish annual Capital programme*

will strengthen confidence. Co-produced thresholds and a clear graduated response will support consistent practice, while barriers to CPD, such as limited INSET time, will be addressed. ***Capital*** *The approved Capital Investment Strategy (July 2026) includes improving accessibility across education settings. This will support development of inclusion bases aligned with co-produced criteria.* ***Data / Digital Systems*** *Enhanced analytical capacity and a new education management system will improve data sharing and decision-making across the system.* ***Quality Assurance*** *RPCF will co-produce a quality assurance framework focused on parental confidence and child experience, ensuring broader representation across SEND communities.*	*Publish annual capital programme* *Process accessibility applications to agree capital funding for new model inclusion bases* ***Data & monitoring*** *Single dashboard; Regional SEND dashboard; DfE data template live* *Implement new management information system* ***Quality Assurance*** *Agree proposal and Specification/ Grant agreement for co-produced QA framework with:* *1. A co-produced set of 5–10 Parent Confidence Standards* *2. A measurable baseline of parental confidence by January 2027*	*Deliver capital works including accessibility upgrades.* ***Data & monitoring*** *Automated run-charts & benchmarking* *Share Inclusion insights report with schools.* ***Quality Assurance*** *Deliver QA activity* *Embed parental confidence and child experience measures in reporting* *Informed strategic decision making*	*Deliver capital works including accessibility upgrades* *Publish sufficiency impact* ***Data & monitoring*** *Benefits realisation report* ***Quality Assurance*** *Benefits realisation report*
Success measures *Drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template E.g.* *Reduce persistent absence (EHCP cohort) from 39% to ≤35%*	*Baseline* *(outline the baseline for your success measures reflecting where you are now – these should be drawn from the metrics in the data template)*	*Target Metrics* *(outline the target metrics that will demonstrate you have achieved the vision summarized above – these should be drawn from the*	*Target Metrics* *(outline the target metrics that will demonstrate you have achieved the vision summarized above – these should be drawn from the*

Reduce severe absence (EHCP cohort) from 11.3% to ≤10% *Reduce suspension rates for SEND (50%)* *Reduce reliance on independent special school places* *Mainstream settings with increased access to Educational Psychologists/SaLT/OT* *Increase EET rates for SEND YP* *Improved access to therapies* *Increase children with SEN in mainstream* *Reduced tribunal appeal rate*	*Persistent absence (EHCP cohort) 39%* *Severe absence (EHCP cohort) 11.3%* *Suspension rates for SEND 61.5%* *ISP 4.9% of EHCP cohort 60% coverage achieved; (EAH)* *EET 83.9%* *SALT: 59.8%, OT: 45.1%* *SEND Support is 68% of SEND cohort* *2.41*	*metrics in the data template)* *persistent absence (EHCP cohort) ≤38%* *severe absence (EHCP cohort) ≤10.8%* *To be aligned with national suspension rates for SEND (55%)* *ISP to ≤5% of EHCP cohort 85% coverage achieved (EAH)* *EET 85.0%)* *SALT 60%* *OT 60%* *SEND Support is 69% of SEND Cohort* *2.35*	*metrics in the data template)* *persistent absence (EHCP cohort) ≤35.5%* *Severe absence (EHCP cohort) reduces to ≤10.3%* persistent absence rate (SEN Support) reduces ≤28%, severe absence rate (SEN Support) reduces to ≤4.5% *To be more aligned with national suspension rates for SEND (55%)* *ISP to ≤2% of EHCP cohort* *100% coverage achieved (EAH)* *EET 87.0%)* *SALT 70%,* *OT 70%* *SEND Support is at least 70% of SEND Cohort* *Tribunal rate 2.35*

6. What will the local area partnership deliver in the first year?

Please outline the key workstreams, milestones and trajectory your local area partnership will deliver and achieve in 2026-27 as well as how you plan to spend the investment allocation that will help fund this year's delivery. Please share key milestones and anticipated dates, success measures, cost breakdown and category. These should incorporate the core minimum requirements, be mapped to the building blocks above and should reflect a more detailed trajectory to the narrative, milestones and target metrics outlined in the 2026-27 column above.

2026-27 Local delivery plan		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Workstream outline – mapped to building block ***Outcome -*** *what you want to achieve with this workstream* ***Success measures –*** *how you measure progress drawing on metrics from the accompanying data template*	***Responsible lead per workstream*** *– accountable for the delivery of the workstream and the identified outcome.*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*	***Milestones per workstream*** *What key milestones will enable you achieve your targeted trajectory*	***Target trajectory per workstream*** *Where do you expect your data to be?*
Building block - Workstream 1 *WS1: Specialist Support and Local Placements* *EAH coverage & standards* ***Outcome*** *Equitable MDT coverage* ***Success measure*** *% settings reached;* ***Building block - Workstream 2*** *WS2: Strengthening Inclusion* *Inclusion bases* *Capital & sufficiency*	*EAH Lead* *Head Of Service – Sufficiency and Transformation*	***EAH coverage & standards*** *Recruitment to MDT approved and underway* *Workshops to co-produce operating standards and identify initial theme/ area.* *Inclusion bases* *Workshop to design first*	*Coverage ≥10% settings* ***N/A***	***EAH coverage & standards*** *Initial team recruited.* *Co-produced operating standards and area for first EAH offer approved.* *Inclusion bases* *Wave 1 sites approved;*	*Coverage ≥30% settings* ***N/A***	***EAH coverage & standards*** *Co-produced operating standards shared and understood.* *Initial multi-disciplinary Team in place.* *First EAH offer deployed.* *Inclusion bases* *first wave designed.*	*Coverage ≥60% settings* *Test sites open* *Min 40 places in inclusion bases*

Outcome *In-borough mainstream capacity up* ***Success measure*** *#inclusion bases opened; placements in bases* ***Building block - Workstream 3*** *WS3: System Leadership, Local Partnership Collaboration and Co-production* *Data and Monitoring* ***Outcome*** *Single view of performance* *Improved co-production QA framework* ***Success measure*** *Improved parental confidence/ children's experiences* *Template submitted; monthly KPI run-charts*	*Head of Service, Performance and Quality* *Head Of SEND*	*wave and develop curriculum access model (EY/primary/secondary/FE) held.* *Capital & sufficiency Agree pipeline & travel impact assessment.* *Publish annual capital programme.* *Engage schools in Accessibility applications for inclusion bases.* *Data & monitoring Baseline and template completed* *QA proposal received and agreed.*	***N/A***	*Capital & sufficiency Accessibility applications received.* *Data & monitoring Implement new management information system.* *Quality Assurance Specification/ Grant agreement in place for co-produced QA framework.*	***N/A***	*(EY/primary/secondary/FE) curriculum access model developed.* *Test site opened – placements in base.* *Capital & sufficiency Process accessibility applications to agree capital funding for new model inclusion bases.* *Data & monitoring Develop regional single SEND dashboard with benchmarking* *A co-produced set of 5–10 Parent*	*N/A* *persistent absence (EHCP cohort) ≤38% severe absence (EHCP*

Building block - Workstream 4 *WS4: Inclusive Culture and Behaviours* *Practice & pathways* ***Outcome*** *Graduated response consistent* ***Success measure*** *Attendance↑; PA↓; exclusions↓*		*Practice & pathways* *Multi-agency workshops to develop EBSA pathway* *Develop (more accessible) CPD offer for 27/28.*		*EBSA pathway launched. Workshops to develop ASD/ SLCN/ SEMH pathways held.* *Approve revised (more accessible) CPD offer for 27/28.*		*Confidence Standards established. A measurable baseline of parental confidence by January 2027.* *Practice & pathways (EBSA, ASD, SLCN, SEMH).* *Launch all boroughwide graduated pathways.* *Publish revised (more accessible) CPD offer for 27/28.*	*cohort) ≤10.8% To be aligned with national suspension rates for SEND (55%)*

Projected Investment Spend per quarter
Please specify funding source for each category

Experts At Hand Funding - Spending Plan	**Q2 (£)**	**Q3 (£)**	**Q4 (£)**
Direct workforce:			
Educational Psychologists	*0*	*168,500*	*168,500*
Specialist teachers	*118,500*	*376,750*	*376,750*
Outreach capacity	*0*	*75,000*	*75,000*
SALT practitioners & OTs	*0*	*104,400*	*104,400*
EAH Lead / Coordinator and other direct staff	*28,333*	*66,333*	*66,333*
Recruitment costs	*19,333*	*19,333*	*19,333*
Other direct delivery costs incl. training, travel, etc	*6,667*	*18,637*	*18,637*
Admin & support - data/digital, systems, QA, etc	*63,500*	*63,500*	*63,500*
Transformation - lead, support, etc	*48,333*	*48,333*	*48,333*
Participation, engagement & comms	*18,667*	*18,667*	*18,667*
Total Spend	***303,333***	***959,453***	***959,453***

Please see Appendix: S05 - Local SEND Reform Plan – Year 1 Delivery Plan

7. How will the local area partnership deliver the first-year plan?

Please set out how you will ensure the required capacity and capability is in place from organisational corporate functions to support implementation of the plan. This could include reference to how you plan to build or bring in project delivery capability to manage delivery against the plan, support prioritisation, and effective use of resources; and how you plan to build the capacity and capability in data and analytics to support effective tracking against the measures in the plan and reporting that informs decision making.

The programme manager will engage all stakeholders ensuring the relevant organisational corporate functions are lined up supporting implementation and accountability for the delivery they have responsibility for. Rotherham has a proven track record for delivering transformation with well-established programme management tools and partnership governance.

We recognise the key risks and dependencies likely to impact delivery of the first-year plan (detailed in section 11) and the accountability across partners necessary to ensure progress and impact. Although parallel activity across workstreams will be required, delivery milestones are phased to ensure demand does not exceed capacity and strong performance and programme management will provide oversight.

Delivery of the first-year plan will be coordinated through a clear structure with ICB and LA strategic management capacity, a dedicated programme manager and project support/ performance functions funded via the transformation grant, ensuring sufficient capacity, and capability across the partnership. This approach brings together leadership, programme management and delivery functions to ensure that priorities are implemented at pace and with consistency.

Information sharing is well embedded, providing a solid platform to develop the analytical reporting the programme requires. The local area has already invested in a new management information system to enable improved reporting across education, health and care. The additional capacity in performance functions will support development of multi-agency dashboards and tracking of vulnerable children to inform a revised “inclusion insights report” measuring inclusive practice.

The first-year plan will include strengthening governance through clearer shared accountabilities, a more explicit performance challenge function, and transparent escalation routes where agreed standards or delivery milestones are not met, to achieve collective ownership of reform delivery.

Reform plan delivery is organised through defined workstreams aligned to the reform building blocks and Rotherham priorities, with performance and risk management within each area and named leads responsible for implementation.

Tracking against the measures in this Reform Plan is explicitly designed to test whether reform activity is resulting in the intended system change. Reviews will take place monthly (Partnership Board), quarterly (SEND Executive) and annually (SEN2 modelling, Cabinet CYPS Capital Programme update and SEF refresh), and this will inform decision making and use of governance/ escalation if expected change is not observed.

8. Other funding Local Authorities.

Block Transfers: If you have made a block transfer (Schools Block to High Needs Block) for 26-27, please set out how your plans for this funding align with the activities outlined above.

The partnership is committed to ensuring that all available funding, including revenue and capital, is used strategically to support the transition to a more inclusive, sustainable SEND system. This includes prioritising investment in early intervention, mainstream capacity and local provision to improve outcomes while reducing long-term cost pressures.

Without reform, high needs demand and associated costs will continue to grow at an unsustainable rate, with projections indicating a cumulative DSG deficit of over £68.9m by 2030/31. This plan sets out a clear 'invest to save' approach, where targeted investment in early intervention, inclusive mainstream provision, and local capacity will reduce demand, moderate cost growth, and improve financial sustainability.

Schools Block to High Needs Block Transfer – 2026/27

For 2026/27, Schools Forum agreed a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, equivalent to £1.3m. The agreed transfer has been incorporated into the High Needs budget for 2026/27 and provides a clear, endorsed funding basis for delivery of the first year of the local SEND Reform Plan.

The transfer supports targeted activity in response to ongoing pressures arising from inflation, rising demand and SEND sufficiency challenges, particularly across SEMH provision and alternative provision, while longer term capacity is developed within the local system. Investment in additional SEND places in Resource Provision within local mainstream schools and special schools remains a key priority; however, the benefits from these developments will take time to be realised. The block transfer enables the authority to manage pressures in a planned and controlled way during this transition period.

In line with the First Year Delivery Plan, block transfer resources will be focused on system critical priorities, including increasing mainstream inclusion capacity, increasing local SEND places and sufficiency, and enhancing data and performance management arrangements. Delivery will be phased and targeted to areas of greatest pressure, with clear oversight and accountability.

This approach provides short-term stability while the reform programme takes effect, with the expectation that reliance on block transfers will reduce as system changes begin to moderate demand.

The financial model demonstrates that, through delivery of this strategy, cumulative pressures can be reduced significantly over time. This improvement is driven by a combination of demand management and system redesign.

Key mitigations include investment in mainstream inclusion bases and support, enabling more children to be supported locally and reducing reliance on high-cost independent provision. Additional savings are delivered through improvements in post-16 pathways, more effective commissioning, and reductions in unit costs for specialist provision.

These financial improvements are directly dependent on successful delivery of the core strategy. Moderating demand for EHCPs and reducing reliance on high-cost placements will be achieved through earlier intervention, improved consistency of inclusive practice, and increased local provision capacity.

The mitigations are considered achievable and reflect a realistic but ambitious shift in system behaviour. However, risks remain—particularly if demand growth exceeds projections or if inclusion improvements do not deliver the expected impact. These risks will be actively managed through robust governance, performance monitoring, and phased implementation.

Capital: We have announced at least £3 billion in high needs capital between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to support children and young people (CYP) with SEND, or those requiring alternative provision (AP). This funding is intended to support place delivery across the full 0-25 age range, including early years and post-16. We expect funding to support the following outcomes:

a. Inclusion at the core of high needs sufficiency strategy, resulting in more children and young people with SEND accessing suitable places in mainstream settings, across all phases of education
b. Every child or young person who needs a place in an inclusion base can access one
c. Fewer children and young people with SEND needing to travel a long way to access a suitable placement
d. Improved suitability of the mainstream estate to support children and young people with SEND, with adaptations to improve inclusivity and accessibility of the physical environment

We also welcome innovative uses of high needs capital to drive inclusion, for example, investment in assistive technology for use in mainstream settings.

Please outline your strategy for how this funding will meet the outcomes above, with reference to the core minimum requirements and other workstreams in this reform plan where appropriate. We would like to see detail around your plans to increase capacity for inclusion bases (formerly known as SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs), such as schools, colleges or early years providers identified, engagement with relevant settings and trusts, and target cohort of needs.

If your plans include increases to places in special schools or specialist post-16 institutions, please include a clear rationale, showing the need that is being met, and why it cannot be met through other types of provision, such as inclusion bases.

If you are receiving additional capital funding to replace one or more planned special or AP free schools, please set out how this funding will meet need in your area, and plans for engaging relevant trusts in your sufficiency planning.

Rotherham's high needs capital strategy is designed to deliver the national SEND Reform outcomes by placing inclusion at the core of sufficiency planning. Investment will focus on increasing capacity within mainstream settings wherever possible, improving the accessibility and suitability of the physical estate, and ensuring more children and young people with SEND can access suitable places in mainstream locally across the 0–25 age range. This approach supports reduced reliance on out-of-area placements and long-distance travel while strengthening system sustainability.

Capital funding will primarily be targeted at improving inclusion and accessibility in mainstream settings. This activity is aligned to the Schools Accessibility Strategy and includes targeted adaptations linked to the needs of individual pupils and cohorts, individual capital contributions through an established equipment panel, and a rolling mainstream accessibility small grants programme. The grants programme will operate twice yearly and be open to all phases, supporting a planned and equitable approach to accessibility improvements. More information is included in **Appendix: S06 - Accessibility Funding Framework.**

As the primary mechanism for increasing capacity capital investment will prioritise the development and sustainability of inclusion bases so that every child or young person who needs a place can access one. Expressions of interest from schools are captured through established processes, with capital due diligence undertaken jointly with education and property colleagues. Experts at Hand support curriculum design and quality assurance will ensure consistency and effectiveness. Continued investment in Rotherham's existing network of fourteen resource provisions will also enable settings to support a broader range of needs through high-quality, specialist environments within mainstream schools.

Where sufficient capacity does not exist within the current estate, the authority will explore repurposing existing space, including schools with falling rolls. This will be supported through a coordinated council-wide approach involving Children and Young People's Services, Property Services, Asset Management and Legal Services.

Increases in special school places will be limited, targeted and time-bound. In the first two years of the plan, additional places will only be created where clear evidence demonstrates that needs cannot be met within mainstream settings or inclusion bases. Beyond this period, specialist place numbers are expected to stabilise, with capital focused on adapting buildings to better meet the needs of pupils with the most complex requirements.

The impact of capital investment will be monitored through a single performance scorecard, measuring mainstream places created, the proportion of the EHCP cohort accessing mainstream provision, and reductions in transport costs resulting from improved local capacity.

The 2026/2027 programme is supported by a High Needs Capital Allocation grant of £3.4m by the DfE. The new SEND Sufficiency

Strategy was approved by Cabinet in February 2026. The Strategy shows the anticipated demand for SEND provision across both mainstream and special schools until 2030. The proposed SEND Sufficiency priorities identified for 2026-2027 (subject to Cabinet approval early July) are: Schools' Accessibility - Mainstream Small Grants Programme and Individual Adaptations: £1m; Schools' Accessibility - Special Schools: £1m; Inclusion Base Development: £750k; and Special School Growth and Alternative Provision: £500k. In addition, capital works at Newman special school will provide a new build block on the main Whiston site and a refurbishment of the listed corridor.

Please see **Appendix: S07 Cabinet report – CYPS Capital Programme (draft)**

Please see: **Appendix: S06 - Accessibility Funding Framework.**

Appendix: S07 Cabinet report – CYPS Capital Programme (draft)
Appendix: S08 - Mapping of Capital Investment to SEND Reform Outcomes

9. System partner and stakeholder engagement, and co-production.

Please outline how the local area partnership plans to engage system partners and stakeholders to develop and implement the plan – include planned engagement with schools and early years settings, alternative providers, FE and post-16 providers (including those your young people attend that are not within your local area), Parents and Carers and children and young people with SEND, with reference to the core minimum requirements. Consider changing roles and responsibilities in the context of the Schools White Paper and how you work collaboratively to manage the transition. Please indicate where additional support is required to engage partners or stakeholders - senior officials at the Department for Education will be available to contribute to summer term events with education leaders and parent carer forum leaders.

Rotherham's SEND system is built on a foundation of nationally recognised co-production underpinned by the Four Cornerstones principles of welcome and care, value and include, communicate and work in partnership, and at the heart of these is trust.

The stakeholder engagement plan **Appendix: S09 - Stakeholder Engagement Plan** provides detail of how the partnership will engage key groups in the development and delivery of the SEND reform plan. Key groups include; Children & Young People, Rotherham Parent Forum, Schools & Settings (including early years and FE), Health Partners, VCS & Community, Elected Members & Governance, Support Services - Genuine Partnerships/ SENDIASS. The plan, which will be reviewed regularly, details the purpose of engagement, initial methods and times of engagement and who will lead.

A sub-regional Memorandum of Understanding will detail the terms of engagement by each South Yorkshire authority to ensure that where children attend cross border provision stakeholders are kept informed and are able to influence delivery without being overwhelmed. E.g. families with children attending cross border schools will be able to engage in the development and delivery of the plan in the area where they reside and the area their child attends school.

Despite the uncertainty within Integrated Care Boards, Rotherham has robust shared governance and accountability, demonstrated by the joint Service Director role in CYPS which provides a solid foundation for the shift outlined in the 2026 Schools White Paper. We will build on our shared goal for earlier intervention, integrated and joint commissioning and willingness to work together across the health and education landscape to ensure improved access to health practitioners and earlier access to health support for children attending mainstream schools, colleges and early years settings.

Existing relationships with Schools, Trusts and FE providers provide a strong platform to shift the education landscape and add impetus to achieve the necessary systemic transition toward early intervention, mainstream inclusion, and universal participation. Engagement will harness good practice e.g. the Accessibility Strategy and associated funding framework which evidences what can be achieved when we work together to make schools more inclusive. Enhanced performance reporting, building on information already shared individually with secondary Head Teachers, communication and escalation processes will strengthen transparency and accountability supporting schools to meet their new legal duties regarding inclusion.

Our Local SEND Reform Plan is built on the priorities identified in our co-produced SENDAP strategy; this ensures we can be confident that our system partners, stakeholders, and importantly children, young people and families, will continue to be committed to working with us to shape how these are achieved. We will continue this active engagement with parent/carer forums to improve confidence and ensure continuous feedback to shape our delivery.

The Rotherham Parent Carer Forum will take a lead role alongside other voice and influence partners e.g. Guiding Voices, SENDIASS, Voluntary Sector Groups to ensure that more diverse children, young people and families are involved in reviewing and shaping the plan. This will include facilitated opportunities for parent carer and children and young people participation at events or activities.

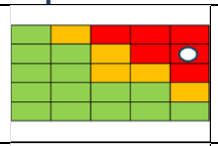
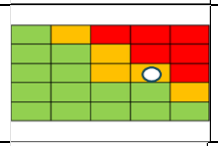
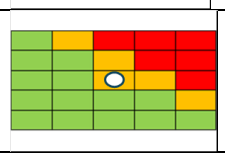
Please see Appendix: S09 - Stakeholder Engagement Plan

10. Risks and Mitigations

What are the key risks that could affect the successful implementation of your Local SEND Reform Plan, and what mitigation strategies are in place to manage these risks? Please include a maximum of 5 risks with impact and likelihood RAG for each risk. See Annex C for suggested risk matrix.

Core Risks have been identified and adapted from the existing SENDAP Risk Register. Each workstream will identify and assess individual risks, with these collated at a Programme Level and updated monthly at the SENDAP partnership Board. This ensures risk management is dynamic, allowing for multi-agency ownership and response. Each risk has a clear owner, mitigations and escalation point. Successful implementation of the SEND Reform Plan will be included on the Education and Inclusion Risk Register and CYPS Directorate Risk Register. This is in line with the local approach to managing and mitigating risks ensuring Strategic oversight and ownership.

A summary of the SEND Reform Plan risks identified is below a comprehensive RAID (Risks, Actions, Issues and Decisions) Log is included as Appendix: S10 RAID log SEND Reforms.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Risk Rating ^Likelihood > Impact	Mitigation Summary
1. Workforce Capacity Recruitment/ Retention e.g. Therapy workforce constraints delay EAH impact	4	5		Joint LA/ICB recruitment; group models; commissioning
Inclusion base openings slip (estates/planning)	3	4		Early feasibility; trust MoUs; travel impact assessment
Graduated response inconsistency drives demand	4	5		Universal offer agreement; QA reviews; SIT outreach
Financial Plan	4	5		Commissioning challenge (EHCP/ Special/ ISP); in-borough capacity; PfA routes
Data quality/latency hampers decisions	3	3		Single dashboard; definitions; QA cycles; training

Please see Appendix: S10 RAID log SEND Reforms.

11. Dependencies

Please detail the key areas of the local area partnership's proposed SEND future state and roadmap that may be impacted by wider reforms nationally and locally and outline how you will manage these. We expect these will include but not be limited to:

- *NHS reforms*
- *Local Government Re-organisation*
- *Reforms to Children's Social Care*
- *Best Start in Life, including Family Hubs*
- *Best Start In Life Strategy*
- *Curriculum and Assessment Review*

Delivery of the Rotherham SEND Reform Plan is dependent on a set of critical local and national conditions. These represent the structural, operational and partnership factors that must be in place to enable successful delivery.

Detailed information about dependencies is included in Appendix: S17 –RAID (Risks, Actions, Issues, Dependencies). Dependencies are actively managed through the programme governance framework, aligned to the local RAID (Risks, Actions, Issues and Decisions) Log. Each dependency is assigned a clear owner, monitored for status, and escalated through the appropriate governance route where delivery risks emerge.

Where dependencies create risk, the programme will undertake detailed impact assessment, including implications for delivery timelines, workforce capacity, financial sustainability and outcomes for children and young people, with mitigation and escalation through the SEND Executive and Partnership structures.

Key Dependencies

NHS Changes
Impact: 1. Local Area Partnership Governance and Multi-Agency Structures 2. Workforce Capacity 3. Integrated Health System and NHS Service Alignment 4. Data, 5. Joint funding

Risk: MDT may not include relevant health expertise, inconsistent messaging, poor quality health data, limited resources to meet medical needs.

Mitigation: Engagement with provider organisations, Joint commissioning, integrated workforce planning, aligned priorities

Wider Reform

Impact: 6. Early Help, Early Intervention and Family Hub Delivery 7. Best Start in Life 8. Inspection Framework and Continuous Improvement

Risk: Pathways do not align

Mitigation: Joint planning, Integrated Governance, Alignment of pathways

Demand

Impact: 9. Forecasting and Sufficiency Planning 10. Capital Investment and High Needs Funding 11. Digital and Operational Infrastructure 12. Graduated Response and Mainstream Inclusion Capacity 13. Post-16 Pathways and Preparation for Adulthood

Risk: Insufficient resource to meet need/ resource in the wrong place, gaps in inclusive practice in mainstream schools remain

Mitigation: Forecasting and sufficiency planning undertaken jointly and informed by comprehensive analysis of data. Governance and escalation to support mainstream engagement.

Parental Confidence

Impact: 14. Co-Production and the Four Cornerstones

Risk: Poor parental confidence continues to drive demand inappropriately.

Mitigation: Co-produced quality assurance including parental confidence measure informs development and delivery of the plan.

Section 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation

12. How will the local area partnership know delivery is on track?

Please set out how you will monitor and track progress referencing:

- ***Monitoring tools and processes*** - the specific tools, systems, and data you will use to track delivery milestones and measure the impact on outcomes.

> *Some Local Area Partnerships hold data in a central SEND operational dashboard. This is used by teams on a weekly basis to identify trends in demand or inform conversations with local school or setting leaders.*
> *In some Local Area Partnerships, a view of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is reviewed monthly by a SEND Board to take decisions on prioritisation, resourcing and delivery of services informed by regular data.*

Please set out how you will use data to track demand (e.g., EHCP applications for assessment), Service delivery (e.g., Speech and Language Specialists deployment; places created), Service quality (e.g., parental satisfaction) and outputs (e.g., pupil attendance; pupil exclusions)

- ***Feedback and adaptation mechanisms*** *- what feedback loops and stakeholder input you will use to review progress and adjust your approach.*

Monitoring under this Reform Plan is explicitly designed to test whether reform activity is resulting in the intended system changes identified through the SEF and maturity assessment.

Monitoring will focus on four areas:

- Demand and escalation: EHCP requests, repeat requests, timeliness of early intervention. Unit costs
- Delivery and fidelity: EAH deployment, inclusion base utilisation, QA findings on graduated response. Capital Programme impact reporting.
- Outcomes: attendance, persistent absence, exclusions, placement stability, post 16 participation.
- System confidence: co-produced parent/carer feedback, variability between schools and trusts, workforce confidence indicators.

The existing performance scorecard is aligned to the SEND Strategy; this predominantly focuses on monitoring Demand and Escalation and Outcomes measures.

Additional Delivery and Fidelity measures will be consolidated. Some of these measures will include:

- EAH response times to requests for support
- Volume and reach of Specialist Inclusion support provided to schools including hours delivered and pupil beneficiaries
- Measurable reduction in Therapies waiting times
- Completion rates and findings from Quality Assurance visits
- Annual report demonstrating progress and impact of capital investment including number of applications received, volume of schemes progressed and completed.
- Co-produced quality measures including a set of 5–10 Parent Confidence Standards

The plan recognises the need to strengthen reporting with a baseline and template completed in Q2, the new management information system implemented in Q3 and development of a single dashboard by then end of year 1 followed by automated run-charts & benchmarking in year 2 and a benefits realisation report in year 3.

The plan recognises that strengthening system and parental confidence is central to delivering lasting impact and outcomes. Included in the delivery plan is the intention to develop a refined set of co-produced quality measures. This will build on the feedback that is already captured during quality assurance visits, parent/carer listening events, professional network events and existing grant monitoring arrangements. Aligning quality measures to specific workstreams will ensure measures are targeted, influence future implementation of the plan, demonstrate system maturity and distance travelled. By Q2 the specification/ grant agreement will be in place for the co-produced QA framework to enable a measurable baseline of parental confidence by January 2027 with subsequent reporting against this in future periods.

Reviews will take place monthly (Partnership Board), quarterly (SEND Executive) and annually (SEN2 modelling, Cabinet CYPS Capital Programme update and SEF refresh), with governance mechanisms enabling timely adjustment where expected change is not observed. Project management and delivery functions will ensure that priorities are implemented at pace and with consistency. Delivery is organised through defined workstreams aligned to the reform building blocks and Rotherham priorities, with performance and risk management within each area and named leads responsible for implementation. Highlight reporting will ensure that the overall delivery plan and road map remain relevant and up to date. Overall accountability for delivery sits with the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), supported by a dedicated Programme Manager and programme management function.

Please see Appends:

- **ME01 - Safety Valve Monitoring Data Dashboard - 1st November 2025**
- **ME02 - SENDAP Scorecard Q3 25 26**
- **ME03 - SENDAP Scorecard Exception Q3 2025 26**
- **ME04 - Schools Accessibility Capital Programme – Best Practice**

13. Reporting to DfE

Using the attached data template, the local area partnership is required to provide quarterly data returns to DfE against selected key metrics. DfE will, in turn, provide quarterly data reports with visualised analysis and benchmarking that will support your local delivery, monitoring and evaluation. This will include data the department holds on ***Attendance****,* ***Exclusions****, and* ***Unauthorised absence****.*

Please use the attached data template to upload your initial data return to DfE.

The Local SEND Reform Plan Data template - March 2026 is included in the commission pack.

Section 4 – Governance

14. How will the local area partnership ensure delivery of plans remain on track?

Please outline the governance structures in place to oversee delivery. Clearly set out who is responsible for overseeing reform delivery, what each governance group or individual is accountable for, and how these arrangements ensure progress is monitored and decisions are made transparently. Please identify where the named SRO for the Local SEND Reform Plan sits within the governance structure and ensure your response incorporates the core minimum requirements.

Governance Mechanism *This may be a governance group, or an individual (e.g. SRO).*	**Purpose/ Responsibilities** *What is the function of this governance mechanism? What are they accountable for overseeing? What information is reported to this governance mechanism?*	**Membership** *Who does this governance mechanism comprise of? [should include health and PCF representation] What stakeholders are represented at this governance mechanism? Please indicate who chairs this. (Include n/a if an individual).*	**Cadence** *How regularly does this governance mechanism meet?*	**Decision Rights** *What decisions can this governance mechanism make?*	**Escalation Route** *Where can this governance mechanism escalate issues or decision to?*
SEND Executive	Owns outcomes and system reform; signs off plan and monitors delivery	Joint Chairs - Director of Children's Services and Integrated Care Board (ICB) Executive Lead for SEND. LA Service Director, Education and Inclusion CYPS Finance Director Head of SEND Designated Clinical Officer Local Authority and ICB Joint commissioner. Service Director, Adult Social Care Designated Social Care Officer Chair and Vice Chair of the Rotherham Parent/Carer Forum (RPCF).	Quarterly	Approve plan, targets, resource shifts	Health and Wellbeing Board / DfE/NHSE review

		Head of Early Years Chair of Schools' Forum Head of Nursing, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Managing Director, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Care Group Director, Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust Assistant Director, Children's Care Group, Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust			
SENDAP Strategic Partnership Board	Operational delivery oversight; resolves risks/dependencies SENDAP Partnership Board will continue to ensure that system partners and key stakeholders are accountable for delivering, reviewing and shaping the plan. Representatives take responsibility for ensuring engagement with key stakeholders in their sector.	Joint Chairs - LA Service Director, Education and Inclusion and Chief Executive Officer, Rotherham Parent Carer Forum. Integrated Care Board (ICB) Executive Lead for SEND CYPS Finance Director Head of SEND Designated Clinical Officer Local Authority and ICB Joint commissioner – Children and Adults.	Monthly	Prioritise actions; deploy resource	Executive Board

		Service Director, Adult Social Care Designated Social Care Officer Chair and Vice Chair of the Rotherham Parent/Carer Forum (RPCF). Consultant, Public Health Head of Early Years Head of Safeguarding Head of Service, Access to Education Principal Educational Psychologist Mainstream school representative (primary and secondary) Special school representative Further education (FE) and training representative Aspire Guiding Voices Matron, Community CYPS, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Deputy Head of Nursing, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Service Manager – Children's Care Group,			

		Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust Assistant Director, Children's Care Group, Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust			
SRO (Service Director)	Accountable for delivery and outcomes; co-chairs Partnership Board with PCF	Senior Responsible Officer + PMO	Weekly	Authorise decisions within scheme	DCS / Partnership Board
Guiding Voices	Oversight of delivery and outcomes; undertakes QA activity; provides CYP voice to influence decision making	Group of young people with SEND aged 10 and above who get together to share our voices	Monthly	Use voice to influence decisions on behalf of other CYP	SRO + PMO Partnership Board
Schools' Forum	Oversight of delivery, sufficiency, performance and financial arrangements.	The Rotherham Schools Forum is a statutory body chaired by a nominated Head Teacher. It provides a formal channel of communication between RMBC and schools across the borough. It also serves as a mechanism for consultation on school funding. There are three types of Forum member; school member, non-school member and	Quarterly	Local education funding issues, including allocation of the High Needs Budget.	Executive Board Partnership Board

		other attendees. Membership is fully representative and proportionate across different school sectors. Other attendees include representation from Rotherham Council.			
Rotherham Parent Carer Forum	Takes a lead role alongside voice and influence partners e.g. Guiding Voices, SENDIASS, Voluntary Sector Groups to ensure engagement with children, young people and families. Leads the co-production and development of the QA reporting regarding parental confidence and child experience.	Parent carer forum led facilitated opportunities for parent carer and children and young people participation, including SEND Connect face to face evening and daytime meet-ups, coffee mornings held in schools, consultations (online and in person), workshops, meetings and Boards.	Weekly	Use voice and QA to influence decisions.	
Rotherham Cabinet	Approval of the Council role in the SEND reform plan, the overarching strategy and aligned resourcing.	The Cabinet is comprised of the Leader and seven other councillors, who are all members of the biggest political group on the Council. It has overall responsibility for services that the Council provides and works	Monthly	Approve overarching strategy and aligned resourcing.	Council

		within the overall policies and budget agreed by the Council.			
Audit Committee	Independent review of governance, risk management and control frameworks and financial reporting.	Nominated Councillor is identified as Chair; members include cross party-political representation.	Bi-monthly	Deploy internal audit and external audit.	Cabinet

If you have a diagram to show the relationship between these governance mechanisms, please upload this here.

Please see Appendix: G01- Rotherham SEND Governance

Section 5 – Central Government Support

15. How can we help you?

Please outline any practical support you need from central government to implement your plan effectively.

This may include:

- *Access to specialist expertise or advisory support*
- *Help with workforce development or recruitment challenges*
- *Tools or templates to support data collection, reporting, or evaluation*
- *Facilitation of peer learning or regional collaboration*
- *Support with system-level coordination across education, health, and care*
- *Guidance on navigating regulatory or policy barriers*

Support to strengthen alignment across education, health and care in line with the wider reform agenda. Clarity about the available levers to bring schools to the table in a meaningful way using their resources to further develop and deliver the plan. Clarity on expectations for LA would support consistent partner accountability, and clear escalation routes where delivery across the ICB, schools, providers or regional partners is not aligned to agreed reform priorities.

Further guidance to support high-quality, consistent completion of the national data template. E.g. where data is held across organisational boundaries or is not routinely captured, including health caseloads for young people without an EHCP. Ongoing benchmarking and comparative data, including statistical neighbour insights, would strengthen sufficiency planning.

Certainty about future funding levels, early visibility and confirmation of funding streams, including High Needs block, capital allocations and Experts at Hand, is critical to enable delivery of our sufficiency strategy and inclusion-led model. This will ensure we can scale provision in line with demand and maintain financial sustainability.

Support to address system-wide workforce challenges, e.g. Educational Psychology and therapies (SaLT and OT). Guidance on flexible workforce models, cross-boundary delivery and integrated commissioning approaches with the ICB.

Greater national clarity on expectations for inclusion bases, staffing, curriculum design, unit costs and QA, would support consistent implementation of our graduated inclusion model. Structured opportunities for peer learning and early access to emerging specialist provision models would further strengthen local delivery and continuous improvement across the partnership.

Annex B - Supporting Documents

Document	Link
The Schools White Paper	Every Child Achieving and Thriving
SEND Consultation Document	SEND reform: putting children and young people first.
LA and Schools Budget 2026-27	Schools Operational Guide 2026-27
Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Guidance and Tool	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan – Data template	Included in commission pack
Local SEND Reform Plan Quality Assessment Framework	Included in commission pack
Local Inclusion Partnership Grant 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Experts at Hand Guidance	To be published Spring 2026
High Needs Capital Allocations 2026-27	To be published Spring 2026
Guidance on Inclusion bases	To be published Spring 2026

Annex C – Risk Matrix

IMPACT DESCRIPTION	IMPACT LEVEL	PROBABILITY/LIKELIHOOD				
		< 10%	>10% - <30%	>30% - <60%	>60% - <90%	>90%
		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Very Likely
Cannot deliver Reform Plan; Failure of mission critical activity.	**Crisis**					
Significant impact to objectives; Significant and sustained disruption to activity.	**Critical**					
Delivery targets are compromised; Project delay / budget overrun.	**Moderate**					
Limited impact on delivery targets; Deviations from project resource, timescale or targets.	**Marginal**					
Minimal impact on delivery targets; Minimal impacts to project / programme efficiency.	**Negligible**					

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility
Making buildings, services, information and learning environments easier for disabled children and young people to use and access.

Academy
A state-funded school that operates independently from the local authority and is usually part of a multi-academy trust.

Alternative Provision (AP)
Education provided for children and young people who cannot attend a mainstream school for a period of time because of their needs or circumstances.

Attendance
How regularly a child goes to school or another education setting.

Best Start Summit
A local event where professionals, partners and stakeholders come together to discuss improving outcomes for children and families.

Capital Funding
Money used for buildings, facilities, improvements or major equipment rather than day-to-day running costs.

Child Voice
The views, experiences and opinions of children and young people which help shape services and decision-making.

Co-production
Professionals, families, children and young people working together as equal partners to design, improve and evaluate services.

Commissioning
Planning, buying and organising services to meet the needs of children, young people and families.

Consultation
Seeking and considering the views of people affected by a proposal before decisions are made.

Data Capability
The ability of organisations to collect, analyse and use information effectively to improve services and make decisions.

Department for Education (DfE)
The government department responsible for education and children's services in England.

Disability
A physical, sensory, learning or mental health condition that has a substantial and long-term impact on someone's daily life.

Educational Psychologist (EP)
A specialist professional who helps children and young people overcome barriers to learning, development and wellbeing.

Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment
A formal assessment carried out to determine whether a child or young person requires an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
A legal document that sets out a child or young person's special educational needs and the support they must receive.

Early Intervention
Providing help as soon as concerns are identified to prevent problems becoming more serious.

Early Years
Education and childcare for children before they start school, usually from birth to age five.

Equitable
Fair and consistent, ensuring people receive the support they need based on their circumstances.

Exclusion
When a pupil is removed from school, either temporarily or permanently, because of behaviour or other concerns.

Experts at Hand (EAH)
A proposed multi-disciplinary support model that brings specialist expertise closer to schools, settings and families so help can be provided earlier.

Further Education (FE)
Education after secondary school but below university level, such as colleges and sixth forms.

Graduated Pathway
A clear route showing the stages of support available as a child's needs increase.

Graduated Response
The process schools use to identify, assess, support and review a child's needs before considering more specialist intervention.

High Needs Block (HNB)
The part of school funding used to support children and young people with SEND who require additional help.

High Needs Budget
The budget used to pay for specialist SEND provision, EHCP support and additional services for children with higher levels of need.

Inclusion
Ensuring all children and young people can participate, learn and belong in their local education setting where appropriate.

Inclusion Base
A specialist provision attached to a mainstream school that provides targeted support while maintaining links with mainstream education.

Independent Placement
A placement in a specialist school or provision that operates independently of the local authority. These placements are often more costly.

Integrated Care Board (ICB)
The NHS organisation responsible for planning and funding health services in a local area.

Joint Commissioning
Different organisations, such as councils and health services, working together to plan and fund services.

Local Partnership Maturity Assessment
A review of how effectively organisations work together to support children and young people with SEND.

Mainstream School
A school that educates most children and young people, including those with SEND, rather than a specialist school.

Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)
An organisation responsible for running a group of academies.

Multi-disciplinary Team
A group of professionals from different backgrounds working together to support children and families.

Occupational Therapy (OT)
Specialist support that helps children develop skills needed for everyday life, learning and independence.

Parent Carer Forum
A representative group that brings together parents and carers of children with SEND to share experiences and influence services.

Parental Confidence
How confident parents feel that services understand and meet their child's needs.

Pathway
A clear description of the support, services and steps available to children and families.

Persistent Absence
A child missing a significant amount of school, usually defined nationally as attendance below a specified threshold.

Placement
The education setting where a child or young person receives their education.

Preparation for Adulthood
Support that helps young people develop the skills, independence and opportunities needed for adult life.

Quality Assurance (QA)
Checking that services, processes and support are effective, consistent and meet expected standards.

SEND
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. A child or young person has SEND if they need additional support to learn because of a disability or learning difficulty.

SEND Code of Practice
National guidance that explains how organisations must identify and support children and young people with SEND.

SEND Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)
A tool used by organisations to assess the quality and effectiveness of their SEND services and support.

SENDIASS
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service. An independent service that provides advice and support to families.

SEND Tribunal
An independent court that hears appeals about SEND decisions, including EHCPs.

SENDAP
The local SEND Accountability and Partnership arrangements that oversee SEND improvement work and reform delivery.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)
A learning difficulty or disability that means a child needs extra educational support.

Special School
A school specifically designed for children and young people whose needs require specialist provision.

Specialist Provision
Education or support specifically designed for children with more complex needs.

Specialist Teaching
Support provided by teachers with expertise in particular SEND needs.

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)
Specialist support that helps children develop communication, speech, language and understanding skills.

Statutory
Required by law.

Statutory Duties
Legal responsibilities that organisations must carry out.

Statutory Override
A temporary government accounting arrangement that prevents SEND deficits immediately affecting local authority budgets.

Sufficiency
Having enough school places, services and support to meet local needs

Threshold of Need
A shared description of the level of need required to access different types of support or services.

Therapy Waiting Times
The time children and families wait before receiving therapeutic support such as speech and language therapy or occupational therapy.

Workforce Capacity
Having enough staff with the right skills and experience to deliver services effectively.

Workforce Development
Training and professional learning that helps staff improve their knowledge and skills.

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Appendix 3

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

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

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

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

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

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

1. Title	
Title: Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029	
Directorate: CYPS	**Service area:** Education & Inclusion
Lead person: Niall Devlin	**Contact:** niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk
Is this a: [X] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029 is a borough-wide strategic framework to improve outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Plan seeks to strengthen early identification and intervention, increase mainstream inclusion, expand local provision, improve access to specialist advice through the Experts at Hand model, and ensure services are delivered as close to home as possible. The Plan also aims to address increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) while improving educational, health and social outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity
All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity. The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are. When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?	x	
Could the proposal affect service users?	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	x	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?	x	

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

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

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

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity
If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made**.** Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation. Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

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

Equality and diversity considerations are central to the SEND Reform Plan. The Plan has been developed through extensive co-production and engagement with parents, carers, children and young people, schools, education providers, health partners and the voluntary and community sector. Feedback from 2,391 parent engagements through the Rotherham Parent Carer Forum has informed priorities including access to therapies, EHCP processes, waiting times and placements. The Plan seeks to improve equity of access by delivering a more consistent and inclusive SEND system across the borough.

The Plan specifically focuses on improving outcomes for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs, a group protected under the Equality Act 2010. Proposed actions include expanded inclusion-base provision, accessibility improvements, consistent pathways for support, strengthened mainstream inclusion, earlier intervention and equitable access to specialist support through the Experts at Hand model.

- **Key findings**

- The Plan directly impacts children and young people with SEND, many of whom have disabilities and other protected characteristics.
- The reform programme aims to reduce inequalities in access to support and address variations in provision between settings and geographical areas.
- Increased mainstream inclusion and accessibility investment should improve participation and access to education for children and young people with SEND.
- Earlier intervention and local provision may reduce barriers experienced by families and improve educational and social outcomes.
- Ongoing co-production arrangements, parental confidence measures and child experience measures will help monitor any unintended equality impacts throughout implementation.
- There is potential for positive impacts on vulnerable families, carers and children by improving access to support and reducing reliance on distant placements.

Actions

- Complete a full Equality Analysis (Part B) to assess impacts in detail across protected characteristics and vulnerable groups.
- Continue engagement and co-production with children and young people, parents, carers and partner organisations throughout implementation.
- Monitor parental confidence, child experience and access to services through programme governance arrangements.
- Ensure accessibility and inclusion considerations are incorporated into all service redesign, capital investment and commissioning activity.
- Monitor data relating to SEND outcomes, attendance, exclusions, placement patterns and participation to identify any differential impacts on protected groups.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	November 2026
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	Prior to implementation of significant service changes arising from the Reform Plan.

Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Niall Devlin Service Director - Education & Inclusion

5. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Niall Devlin	Service Director - Education & Inclusion	30/09/2026
Nicola Curley	Executive Director, Children and Young People's Services	05/10/2026
Cllr Victoria Cusworth	Cabinet Member for Children's Services	07/10/2026

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	30th September 2026
Report title and date	Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	Cabinet Report - 16 November 2026
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	05/10/2026

Appendix 4

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

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

This form:

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

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

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

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 5th October 2026	
Directorate: CYPS	**Service area:** Education & Inclusion
Lead Manager: Niall Devlin	**Contact number:** 01709 254235
Is this a: [X] **Strategy / Policy** [ ] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	**Organisation**	**Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)**
Niall Devlin	RMBC	Service Director, Education & Inclusion
Cary-Anne Sykes	RMBC	Head of Service, Inclusion
Helen Sweaton	RMBC	Joint Service Director, Commissioning, Performance & Quality

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

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

The Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029 is a borough-wide strategy affecting children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their families, carers, educational settings, health providers and partner organisations. The Plan aims to improve outcomes through earlier intervention, stronger mainstream inclusion, increased local provision, improved access to specialist advice through the Experts at Hand model and improved partnership working.

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

Information is available from:

- SEND population and EHCP trend data.
- SEND Self-Evaluation Framework (January 2026).
- Local Partnership Maturity Assessment (March 2026).
- Attendance, exclusion and placement data.
- Feedback from 2,391 parent engagements facilitated through the Rotherham Parent Carer Forum.
- Multi-agency workshops, SENDAP governance groups and education partnership engagement.
- Child experience and parental confidence measures.

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

While substantial SEND-related information is available, there is less detailed analysis currently available regarding differential outcomes within the SEND population by ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. These will be reviewed through ongoing monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

The impact of the Plan will be monitored through: • SENDAP Strategic Partnership Board. • SEND Executive governance arrangements. • SEND dashboards and performance reports. • Parental confidence measures. • Child experience measures. • Monitoring of attendance, exclusions, EHCP timeliness, placement patterns and outcomes. • Annual SEND Self-Evaluation Framework reviews.	
Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)	Parents, carers, children and young people have been engaged through: 2,391 Parent Carer Forum engagements. Best Start Summit. SENDAP partnership engagement. Multi-agency consultation workshops. Ongoing co-production arrangements. Key findings highlighted concerns regarding therapy waiting times, EHCP processes, access to support, inclusion and local placement availability.
Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s)consulted and key findings)	Engagement has taken place through: Schools and education settings. Educational Psychology services. Specialist teaching services. Health professionals. SEND strategic partnership groups. Key themes included workforce capacity, consistency of graduated response arrangements, earlier intervention and access to specialist expertise.

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

The Plan is specifically designed to support children and young people with SEND, many of whom are disabled under the Equality Act 2010. It seeks to improve access to education, health and care support through earlier intervention, improved inclusion, enhanced accessibility and increased local provision. The Plan also benefits families, carers and vulnerable households by reducing delays in accessing support and reducing reliance on distant placements.

Specific positive impacts include:

- Age: Supports children and young people aged 0-25 through improved transition pathways and preparation for adulthood.
- Disability: Directly benefits disabled children and young people through improved access to support, specialist advice and inclusive education.
- Race/Ethnicity: Consistent borough-wide pathways aim to improve equitable access irrespective of geographical location or background.
- Sex: No adverse impact identified; improved support available to all eligible children and young people.
- Religion or Belief: No barriers identified. Services remain available irrespective of faith or belief.
- Pregnancy and Maternity: Improved support for young parents and families where SEND needs are identified.
- Sexual Orientation/Gender Reassignment: No adverse impacts identified; access to support is based on assessed need.
- Carers and Families: Significant positive impact through improved access to support, confidence in services and reduced need for out-of-borough provision.

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

No direct adverse impacts have been identified. However, risks include:

- Workforce recruitment challenges affecting access to specialist support.
- Potential inconsistency in implementation across education settings.
- Risk that anticipated inclusion capacity is not delivered at the planned pace.
- Potential inequality if monitoring does not identify emerging issues for specific communities.

These risks will be mitigated through governance, workforce planning, quality assurance and ongoing co-production.

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

Yes.
The Plan is expected to deliver substantial positive equality impacts by:

- Improving access to support earlier.
- Increasing mainstream inclusion opportunities.
- Expanding inclusion-base provision.
- Improving accessibility.
- Strengthening local provision.
- Reducing travel and separation from local communities through fewer distant placements.
- Improving attendance, participation and educational outcomes.
- Enhancing parental confidence and child experience.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

The Plan is expected to have a positive impact on community relations by promoting inclusion, improving understanding of SEND needs and increasing opportunities for children and young people with SEND to participate within their local communities. The co-production approach strengthens relationships between families, education settings, health services and the Council and should improve confidence in local services.

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

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

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

Title of analysis: Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029
Directorate and service area: CYPS
Lead Manager: Niall Devlin – Service
Summary of findings:
The Equality Analysis identifies overwhelmingly positive impacts arising from the Local SEND Reform Plan. The Plan directly supports children and young people with disabilities and SEND by improving access to education, health and care services, reducing barriers to inclusion and strengthening local provision. No significant adverse impacts have been identified. Risks relating to workforce capacity, consistency of implementation and monitoring arrangements have been identified and appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated within programme governance. Ongoing monitoring, data analysis and co-production arrangements will ensure that any emerging equality impacts are identified and addressed promptly.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Monitor SEND outcomes, attendance, exclusions and placement patterns for differential impacts	A, D, RE, S, O	Ongoing to March 2029
Continue co-production with children, young people, parents and carers throughout implementation	D, C, O	Ongoing
Monitor parental confidence and child experience measures through governance arrangements	D, C, O	Annual Review
Ensure accessibility and inclusion requirements are embedded within capital and service development projects	D	Ongoing

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

6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Niall Devlin	Service Director - Education & Inclusion	October 2026
Nicola Curley	Executive Director, Children's and Young People's Services	05/10/2026
Cllr Victoria Cusworth	Cabinet Member for Children's Services	07/10/2026

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date Equality Analysis completed	5th October 2026
Report title and date	Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029, Cabinet 16 November 2026
Date report sent for publication	October 2026
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	5th October 2026

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Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified:			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across the Borough as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	Unknown	The Reform Plan seeks to make better use of existing mainstream and specialist educational provision and improve the effectiveness of SEND services rather than significantly increasing the Council's building estate. Any future adaptations to schools or educational settings may have limited impacts on energy use.	None.	Any future capital projects should incorporate energy efficiency measures and align with the Council's climate commitments.	Climate impacts to be considered as part of individual business cases and capital schemes arising from the Reform Plan.
Emissions from transport?	Decrease	Expansion of local SEND provision and strengthening of mainstream inclusion are expected to reduce reliance on out-of-borough placements and associated transport commissioned by the Council.	Reduced travel distances for pupils, families and professionals may contribute to lower transport-related emissions across the borough.	Prioritise local provision wherever appropriate and continue to develop services closer to home.	Monitor trends in home-to-school transport demand and out-of-borough placements through programme governance arrangements.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None	The Plan does not directly affect waste generation or disposal arrangements.	No significant borough-wide impact anticipated.	Existing waste reduction and recycling arrangements will continue.	None required beyond existing corporate arrangements.

Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None	The proposal does not affect housing stock or domestic energy use directly.	No significant impact anticipated.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Increase	Some future projects resulting from SEND sufficiency planning may require adaptations, expansion or development of educational facilities, creating temporary construction-related emissions.	Limited construction activity will generate short-term carbon emissions.	Any future development projects should follow sustainable design principles, procurement standards and energy efficiency requirements	Measuring and reporting on the council's scope 3 emissions is an ongoing area of work and it is complicated to calculate these types of emissions accurately. Therefore, it is not considered feasible to monitor the embodied carbon of these projects due to the relatively small scale relative to the cost and effort of obtaining this information.
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None	The Reform Plan does not directly affect carbon capture measures.	No significant impact anticipated.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Identify any emissions impacts associated with this decision which have not been covered by the above fields: The Reform Plan may support a reduction in staff, family and professional travel through increased use of local provision, integrated delivery models and closer multi-agency working. Increased use of digital information sharing and collaborative working may also reduce some business travel requirements. No significant additional emissions impacts have been identified.					

Will the proposal affect Council services' resilience to climate change, or the capacity of people living in the Borough to adapt to climate change? The Reform Plan is not primarily focused on climate adaptation. However, by strengthening local educational provision, improving partnership working, increasing capacity within mainstream settings and developing more resilient local support systems, the Plan may indirectly enhance

the resilience of children and young people with SEND and their families during periods of disruption caused by severe weather events, transport disruption or other climate-related incidents.

The proposal is not expected to increase climate-related risks within the Borough and may provide a small positive contribution by reducing dependence on travel-intensive service arrangements and supporting more locally available provision.

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

The overall climate impact of the Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026-2029 is expected to be neutral to slightly positive. The most significant potential impact relates to transportation, with the expansion of local SEND provision and reduced reliance on out-of-borough placements likely to reduce travel requirements for pupils, families, staff and commissioned transport services. Potential emissions associated with any future school adaptations or expansion projects are expected to be limited and can be mitigated through sustainable design, procurement and energy efficiency measures. Climate impacts associated with future capital projects will be assessed separately through project-specific appraisal processes and climate impact assessments where required.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Niall Devlin Service Director, Education & Inclusion Education & Inclusion Children and Young People's Services
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	• Rotherham Local SEND Reform Plan 2026–2029. • SEND sufficiency and placement data referenced within the Cabinet report. • Information relating to local provision, transport demand and out-of-borough placements contained within the Reform Plan.
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA700 Katie Rockett Climate Change Officer

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026

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)
Vicky Chew, Head of Safeguarding, CYPS

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Each Local Safeguarding Children Partnership is required to publish an annual assurance report. The report for 2025 to 2026 sets out the effectiveness of Rotherham's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, progress against partnership priorities, areas requiring further assurance and the priorities for 2026 to 2027.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026; and

2. Notes the partnership priorities and areas requiring continued assurance for 2026 to 2027.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Annual Assurance Report, 2025-26
Appendix 2 Initial Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Working together to safeguard children 2026: statutory guidance
Cabinet Report - Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Nov 2024
South Yorkshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

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

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026

1. Background

1.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children is the statutory guidance governing how agencies work together to help, support and protect children. The Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) brings together Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and South Yorkshire Police (SYP), alongside education and other relevant agencies.

1.2 The Lead Safeguarding Partners are the Chief Executive of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, the Chief Executive of NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police. Their responsibilities are exercised locally through the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the RSCP Executive, comprising: the Executive Director, CYPS; Chief Nurse and Director of Nursing, ICB; Rotherham District Commander, SYP; and Head of Safeguarding, CYPS).

1.3 The statutory guidance requires the Partnership to publish an annual report setting out what partners have done, how effective the arrangements have been, what difference the work has made for children and families, the contribution of partner agencies, learning from reviews and scrutiny, and how partnership resources have been used.

1.4 The appended report covers activity from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It draws on inspection findings, performance information, multi-agency audits, case review activity, training evaluation, independent scrutiny and the work of the Partnership's delivery and working groups.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The report provides overall assurance that Rotherham's safeguarding arrangements are effective and supported by strong multi-agency leadership, engagement and accountability. The Partnership has stable governance, good attendance at strategic and operational groups and an established culture of professional challenge. The report is also clear that stronger evidence is still needed to show how strategic activity changes children's day-to-day experiences and outcomes.

2.2 External inspection provides significant assurance. Ofsted rated Rotherham children's services Outstanding in 2025, identifying stable leadership, compassionate and high-quality social work, thorough child-focused assessments and effective partnership working. The local area SEND inspection found that arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes, while identifying the need to reduce waits for neurodevelopmental assessment and improve occupational therapy and speech and language therapy provision.

2.3 Safeguarding activity shows a generally positive position over the four-year period, with reductions in Child Protection Plans and Section 47 enquiries followed by a more stable picture. During 2025 to 2026, around 620 children were supported on a Child Protection Plan, and 914 children were in need at year end. The number of children in care increased slightly from 471 to 477 and will remain under review.

2.4 Elective Home Education has increased from approximately 450 to around 1,000 children. This is a national trend but represents a material local shift in demand and is assessed as a red area in the report. Six-monthly reporting to the Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group will strengthen oversight of children who are also open to Children's Services or where there are educational concerns. The report notes increases in both children missing education and Elective Home Education. The Elective Home Education data show a rise from around 450 children in 2023–24 Term 1 to 900 in 2025–26 Term 2. The Partnership identifies Children Out of Sight as a priority for 2026–27. Specific oversight for Elective Home Education includes six-monthly reporting to the Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group for children open to Children's Services or where there are educational concerns. Wider work includes the Safeguarding Education Risk Assessment and an Educational Neglect Policy.

2.5 The Partnership has established a Neglect Pathway, expanded Graded Care Profile 2 training, introduced the RESHHAPED screening tool (a professional multi-agency safeguarding tool used by the RSCP) and strengthened links with education, health, substance misuse and probation services. Completion of Graded Care Profile 2 assessments remains inconsistent, with approximately 27% of children on a Child Protection Plan having a completed assessment. The report gives reasonable assurance that neglect is being identified earlier, and identifies the need for management escalation, audit and clearer evidence of impact on children.

2.6 The Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group has strengthened multi-agency oversight of children missing education, children who are electively home educated and young people who are not in education, employment or training. Work during 2026 to 2027 will include the Safeguarding Education Risk Assessment, an Educational Neglect Policy, implementation of learning from Operation Lemur Alpha, online safety activity and support for schools responding to harmful sexual behaviour.

2.7 The first phase of the Harm Outside the Home Pathway has been launched, using multi-agency meetings with children and parents to develop safety plans for young people at risk of exploitation. Approximately 12 young people had entered the pathway at the time of reporting, and the EVOLVE team worked with 119 young people during the year. Priorities include reducing repeat missing episodes, strengthening disruption activity, responding to online harm, improving investigation outcomes and maintaining a focus on children facing both sexual and criminal exploitation.

2.8 Practice, Performance and Learning arrangements completed four thematic multi-agency audits and a targeted review of the Child Sexual Abuse Risk

Assessment Panel. Five referrals for local child safeguarding practice reviews were considered; none progressed to a rapid review or national notification. The learning highlights the importance of understanding family history, improving cross-border information sharing, involving fathers and male carers, maintaining professional curiosity and recording children's lived experience. There were 773 attendances at partnership training and approximately 4,400 successful e-learning completions.

2.9 Children and families contributed to individual safety planning and wider survey activity, but the Partnership recognises that their influence on strategic assurance and decision-making must be stronger. Planned work includes presenting the annual report to Young Inspectors, involving children and families in Families First and Child Sexual Abuse planning and implementation activity, and exploring a child safeguarding reference and scrutiny group.

2.10 The priorities for 2026 to 2027 are Children Out of Sight; Exploitation and Harm Outside the Home; Vulnerable Babies and Family Help; and Child Sexual Abuse. Neglect will continue to be embedded and monitored as it moves from a time-limited strategic priority. Across all priorities, the Partnership will strengthen children's voice, multi-agency information sharing and evidence of impact. Neglect will move into a monitoring and assurance phase, with continued oversight through Practice, Performance and Learning, as Child Sexual Abuse is introduced as a strategic priority. Across all priorities, the Partnership will strengthen children’s voice, multi-agency information sharing and evidence of impact.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The option of not publishing the annual assurance report is not available because publication is a statutory requirement. Cabinet is not being asked to approve the operational activity of individual partner agencies.

3.2 The recommended proposal is that Cabinet notes the annual assurance report, including the overall assurance position, and the Partnership's priorities for 2026 to 2027.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 No separate formal consultation was undertaken for this retrospective assurance report. The report draws on feedback obtained through safeguarding activity, audits, practitioner engagement, surveys and the involvement of children and parents in Harm Outside the Home safety planning.

4.2 A child-friendly and family-friendly summary has been produced. During 2026 to 2027, the Partnership will strengthen the direct involvement of children and families in scrutiny, strategy development and assessment of impact.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The annual report was published by 30 September 2026 and shared with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Department for Education in accordance with statutory guidance.

5.2 The Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners are collectively accountable for the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The RSCP Executive will oversee delivery, with independent scrutiny provided by the Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

5.3 Progress against the 2026 to 2027 priorities will be monitored through delivery group reports, the partnership scorecard, audit and review activity, and exception reporting to the RSCP Executive. The next annual report will provide public accountability for progress and impact.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct additional financial implications arising from Cabinet noting the annual assurance report. Partnership activity is funded through contributions from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (policing and crime function) and the Probation Service, together with resources carried forward from the previous year.

6.2 Total expenditure for 2025/26 was £278k against total available resources (including resources carried forward from the previous year) of £313k resulting in an underspend of £35k. The year end underspend has been carried forward into 2026/27.

6.3 The RSCP Executive has scrutinised the underspend. The carried-forward resources will support additional training associated with the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, the Families First Partnership Programme and learning from Operation Lemur Alpha. Any further expenditure will remain subject to partnership and Council financial governance.

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

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 Sections 16E and 16G of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, establish the statutory multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The safeguarding partners for a local authority area are the Local Authority, the relevant Integrated Care Board and the Chief Constable for the relevant police area. The safeguarding partners are required to make arrangements to work together, and with relevant agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area.

7.2 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 requires the safeguarding partners to publish a yearly report on the impact and effectiveness of the multi-

agency safeguarding arrangements. The report must address the activity undertaken during the preceding 12-month period and provide evidence of the effectiveness and impact of the arrangements, including learning and improvement, partner contributions, independent scrutiny, the use of resources, information sharing and the involvement and experience of children and families. Annual reports should be published by the end of September each year, reflecting activity undertaken during the previous financial year, and provided to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Department for Education within seven days of publication.

7.3 Cabinet is being asked to note the Annual Assurance Report and the Partnership's priorities and areas requiring continued assurance. Cabinet's consideration of the report does not transfer, replace or otherwise alter the statutory functions, operational responsibilities or accountability of the individual safeguarding partners, which remain responsible for discharging their respective statutory duties. There are no legal implications by following the recommended proposal at 3.2.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct staffing changes arising from the recommendations. Delivery of the Partnership's priorities will continue to require agencies to release staff for training, audit, review, governance and multi-agency practice development. Any workforce changes will be managed through the relevant organisation's established processes.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The annual report describes how partners work together to identify risk, protect children and improve safeguarding practice. Developments in neglect, education safeguarding, exploitation, professional challenge and partnership learning are intended to support earlier help, clearer assessment and better coordinated protection.

9.2 The report also identifies where children are not yet experiencing a consistently strong response. These areas include variable use of Graded Care Profile 2, increasing numbers of children outside mainstream education, online harm, cumulative vulnerability, access to some specialist services and the need for children’s lived experience to have greater influence on strategic decisions.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Partnership's work contributes to the Council's commitment to reduce inequality and uphold children's rights. Assurance activity must continue to consider how poverty, disability, ethnicity, sex, care status and education arrangements affect children's visibility, experience of services and exposure to harm.

10.2 An Initial Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2. The Cabinet recommendation is to note a retrospective assurance report rather than

approve a new service or policy. Strategies and policies referred to within the annual report remain subject to their own equality analysis where required.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are minimal direct implications for carbon emissions. Most partnership meetings are held online or through existing venues. Any future commissioned activity with a material carbon impact will be considered through the relevant decision-making and procurement process.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Publication of the annual report supports the joint accountability of the three statutory safeguarding partners and recognises the contribution of education, probation, health providers, community and voluntary organisations and other relevant agencies.

12.2 Each partner remains responsible for its own statutory compliance, operational practice, workforce development and resource decisions. The RSCP Executive and delivery groups provide collective oversight, challenge and assurance, supported by independent scrutiny.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Failure to publish a compliant annual report within the required timescale could result in escalation to the Secretary of State and reduce public and partner confidence. This risk is mitigated through oversight by the Business Unit, the RSCP Executive, the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

13.2 The principal safeguarding risks identified in the report are inconsistent implementation of agreed practice, limited evidence of impact, the increase in children who are less visible to universal services, online harm and gaps in the strategic influence of children and families. These risks are being addressed through delivery plans, performance reporting, audit, training, case learning and independent scrutiny.

14. Accountable Officers

Nicola Curley, Executive Director, CYPS

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	16/10/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	20/10/26

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ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2025-26



1. WELCOME TO THE 2025-26 RSCP ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

It is once again a great pleasure not only to contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) Annual Report, but also to serve as the Independent Chair and Scrutineer, a role I assumed in early 2023. The Partnership benefits from excellent engagement from all key partners and a culture of constructive challenge, which continues to drive improvement. The Partnership has strong foundations and continues to grow and improve the services it delivers, striving to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

The Annual Report for 2025-26 reflects our continued commitment to delivering the best possible outcomes for the children and young people of Rotherham. It highlights both the excellent work being delivered across the partnership and the areas where further improvement is required. During the year, Rotherham Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted and graded as "Outstanding", an exceptional achievement that reflects the hard work, professionalism and commitment of staff across the service.

Since becoming the Independent Chair and Scrutineer, I have continued to be impressed by the strength of engagement across the partnership and the collective determination to safeguard children and provide them with the best possible start in life.

The partnership has seen stability in staffing, which is unusual given the level of change across public sector organisations. Despite the changes being experienced across health organisations, there has been excellent attendance and commitment to the partnership, at all levels, right through to the strategic group.

The annual report will provide the current context in which services are operating, and the challenges that are faced by professionals and children across Rotherham. There is a positive position over recent years with a reduction in key statutory

interventions alongside some emerging areas of pressure. The number of Child Protection Plans and S47 enquiries have also fallen, and then become stable. The number of Children in Care has also reduced markedly since 2022-2023, although the last year saw a small increase, it is still a positive position. In contrast, Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers have increased, rising from approximately 450 to 1,000 children. This upward trend represents a shift in demand and is an area of significant work across the partnership, as well as being a national challenge.

As we move into the next year and refresh our plans for 2026-27, I look forward to continuing to support and challenge the Partnership in delivering positive improvement and ensuring children receive the best possible start in life. Many of the current priorities will remain, and work will strengthen the activities they deliver, such as those related to exploitation and education. We will also continue to embed the work on neglect and move to focus more on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), which is an area of national focus. There are also key work streams that impact the partnership, that will be delivered through the next year, including the Families First Programme (FFP).

Darren Downs, Chair of the CYPS Executive Board

The RSCP in 2025-26: At a Glance

6 Key Achievements in 2025-26



Launch of the Neglect Pathway, offering universal services support in recognising neglect and targeting the right support at the right time.



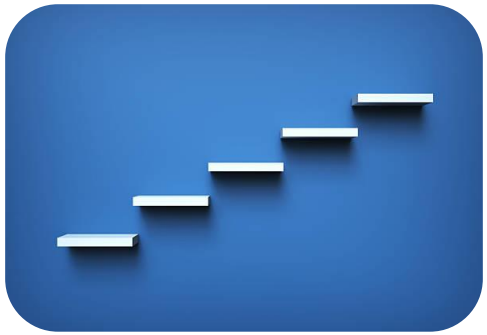
The Harm Outside the Home (HOtH) Pathway commenced, offering collaborative conferencing for children at risk of exploitation.



Safeguarding in Education Vision launched, focusing on preventative and robust measures to keep children safe in schools and alternative provision.



RSCP Neglect Conference held, bringing together over 200 practitioners and managers from across the borough, with a focus on restorative relationships and challenging conversations.



Development of the Partnership Escalation Policy, ensuring that staff are supported through escalation processes and that thematic information is captured and acted upon.



Inaugural Safeguarding Awards held as part of Safeguarding Awareness Week 2025. Ten awards were presented across the adults' and children's sectors, including awards recognising young people.

6 Key challenges and Opportunities in 2026-27



The number of children receiving Elective Home Education continues to rise, with more than 1,000 children recorded as EHE at year-end.



Online harm remains the most prevalent form of exploitation, with school settings managing increased levels of risk and online activity.



The National Panel has published *Protecting Vulnerable Babies Better*, calling for enhanced information sharing and improved recognition of risk.



The Families First Partnership Programme will reshape the delivery of Child Protection, placing greater emphasis on Family Group Decision Making and partnership working.

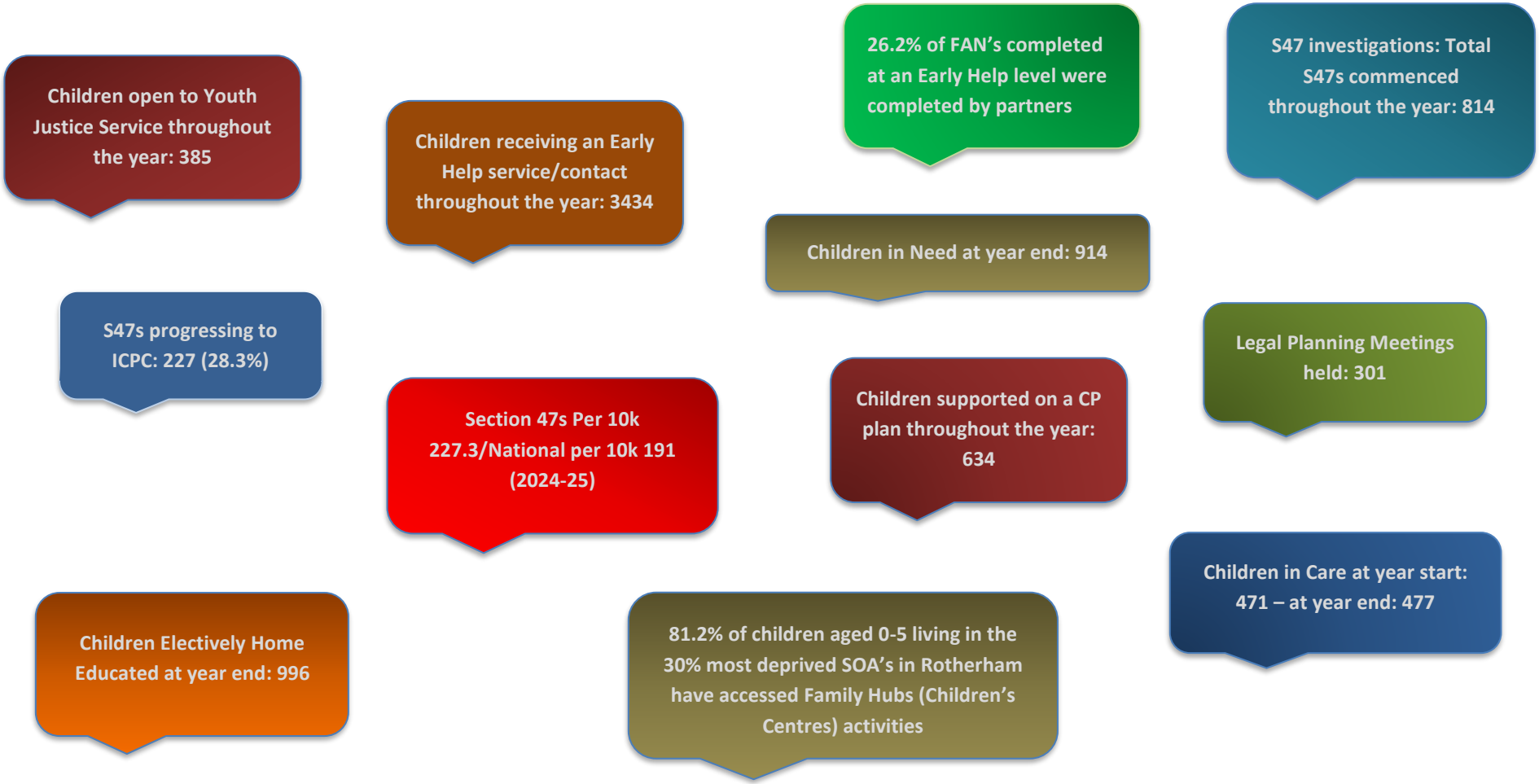


Through the South Yorkshire LSP network, there are opportunities for greater collaboration across the four safeguarding children's partnerships through the sharing of training, policy, guidance and practice experience.



Through Phase Two of the HOtH project, there will be increased activity within community settings, ensuring that business partners are supported in recognising exploitation and helping to reduce risk.

Key Metrics in 2025-26 at a glance:



2. THE LOCAL CONTEXT

An Introduction to Rotherham

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

Borough (22.9% of the local population – ONS, 2022).

23% of children living in Rotherham are in low-income families (England 19.8% -2023). Our Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement rate is above the national average, 26.6% compared to 24.3% at Primary phase and 27.9% compared to 24.1% at Secondary phase (DfE 2023/24). 22.8% of our school-age population is from an ethnic minority background. (England 38.7%) (DfE 2023/24).

Key Partner Inspection Findings in period

Organisation	Inspection Body & Date	Overall Rating	Key Strengths	Areas for Improvement
[1]Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) ILACS Inspection	Ofsted (2025)	Outstanding	Leadership and management has driven stable, compassionate, and high-quality social work practice.	The quality of pathway plans and health history information provided to care leavers.

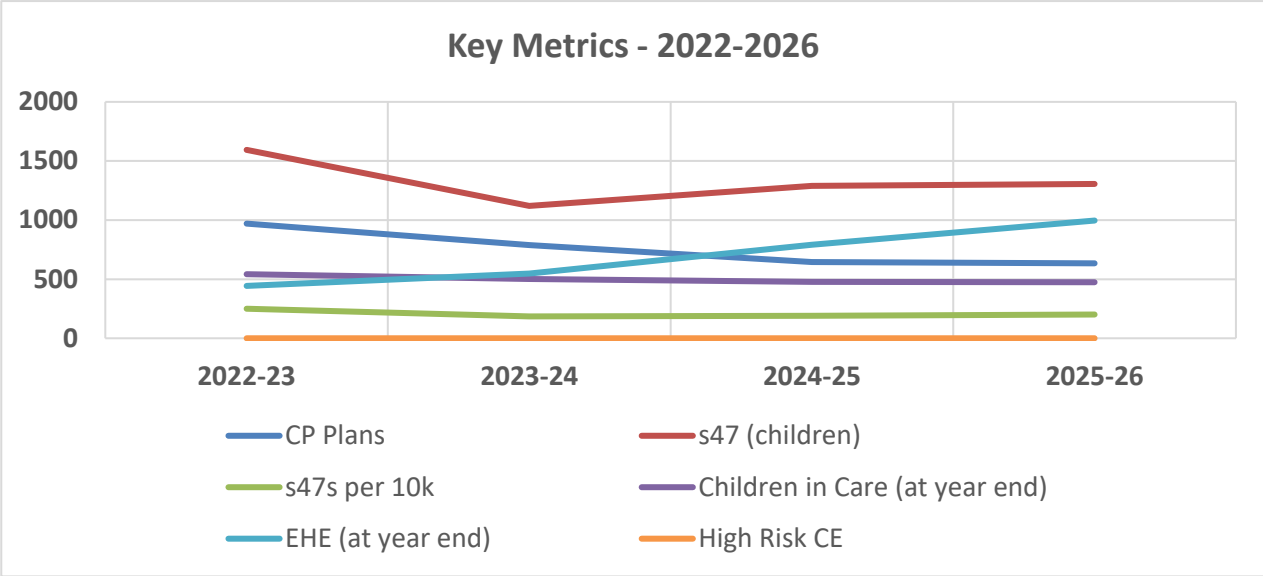
[1] https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50292638

			Assessments were thorough, child-focused and grounded in the experiences and voices of children and families. With no urgent priority actions identified, RMBC benefits from a stable workforce and strong partnerships with health and police sectors, allowing social workers to build meaningful, lasting relationships with local families.	
[2]Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council/South Yorkshire ICB SEND Inspection	Ofsted (2025)	The local area partnership's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children	The SEND partnership achieved the highest Ofsted rating through a "Four Cornerstones" strategy and strong multi-agency collaboration. Early identification and	Leaders across the partnership should continue to reduce the long waits for neurodevelopmental assessment pathways. Leaders should intensify service improvements

[2] https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50261626

		and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.	support are provided to families before formal diagnosis, with children's voices actively shaping services to improve accessibility to mental health and specialist care. The partnership prepares older youth for adulthood through targeted independence training and inclusive career fairs.	for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy at a universal and targeted level.

A Focus on Child Protection Activity



- Analysis of safeguarding activity over the four-year period (2022-23 to 2025-26) demonstrates a generally positive picture, with reductions in key statutory interventions alongside some emerging pressures. The number of Child Protection Plans has reduced consistently from approximately 950 to around 620, while Section 47 enquiries have also fallen significantly before stabilising at just under 1,500. These trends may indicate strengthened early help arrangements, improved threshold application and effective multi-agency working. As a result, both indicators are assessed as Green.

  Action: Continued monitoring and assurance

- In line with the numbers above, the rate of Section 47 enquiries per 10,000 population also shows an initial decrease followed by a stable picture, suggesting that while demand has reduced, it has now levelled off. Similarly, the number of Children in Care reduced significantly between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but has since plateaued, with a slight increase recorded in the most recent year. This trend has occurred alongside a reduction in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). These indicators are therefore rated Amber, reflecting the need for continued monitoring and a sustained focus on demand management, permanence planning and edge-of-care support.

  Action: Business Manager attendance at the PLO Panel has provided assurance regarding robust senior management oversight. Further quality assurance activity exploring themes associated with admissions to care will be undertaken during 2026-27.

- In contrast, Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers have increased steadily across the full reporting period, rising from approximately 450 to 1,000 children. This consistent upward trend, with accelerated growth in recent years, represents a material shift in demand and is assessed as Red, requiring further analysis to understand the underlying drivers and ensure a robust safeguarding and multi-agency response for children where concerns exist

  Action: 6 Monthly reporting into SEDG by the EHE manager to offer assurance of safeguarding grip, specifically of children open to CYPS and where educational concerns exist.

  The RSCP will continue to implement learning from the local review for Child A , including assurance as to increased multi agency information sharing.

3. PROGRESS AGAINST STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Priority: Neglect

Introduction from Strategic Chair – Gemma Cross, Head of Quality, Governance and Assurance, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

Neglect has been a priority for the Partnership for several years, and we are now in the third year of the Delivery Group, which brings the strategy to life. The group has maintained strong partnership working, with representation from across both statutory and third sector organisations. Our ambition is to prevent and reduce the incidence of neglect within Rotherham, ensure that children feel safe, and help all families to thrive within the borough.

The Group is proud to have:

- *Established the use of the evidence-based neglect assessment tool - Graded Care Profile 2. We have increased our training capacity in-house and have a robust training programme for professionals to use the tool in practice. We have embedded the use of the tool within statutory procedures through the Neglect Pathway, with a GCP2 required for all children subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of neglect.*
- *Established a data dashboard from partners that enables scrutiny of activity linked to neglect, this has enabled us to critically review various areas of practice such as the high prevalence of dental caries in under 5s in our borough. We have been able to work with the dental council to improve awareness of neglect within the context of oral health, and circulated a briefing on actions dentists can take to intervene when factors related to neglect are present.*
- *Developed and launched a screening tool for education and early years partners to use to identify neglect earlier and take remedial action alongside families to address issues before concerns escalate.*
- *This tool will be rolled out to other partners such as in Youth Justice, Probation and Clinic settings in 2026-27.*
- *Held a Conference focused on Neglect, sharing national best practice, family solutions and supporting our pathway launch*

- *Worked with partners in substance misuse and probation services to support a Think Family approach.RDaSH have updated their assessments in adult mental health services to include consideration of others affected by the adult's circumstances, including children.*
- *'Was not brought' processes for health partners have been reviewed and developed, we now have clear policy guidance and an established dataset to understand the incidence of children not being brought to appointments*
- *Launched a public-facing awareness campaign in 2025-26, these leaflets and posters will become more visible throughout the next year in public settings such as supermarkets, GP surgeries, hospitals and family hubs.*

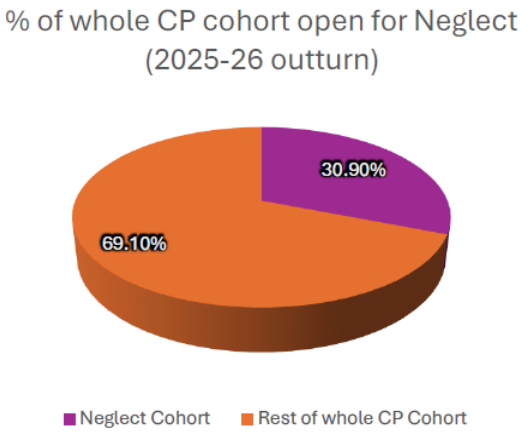


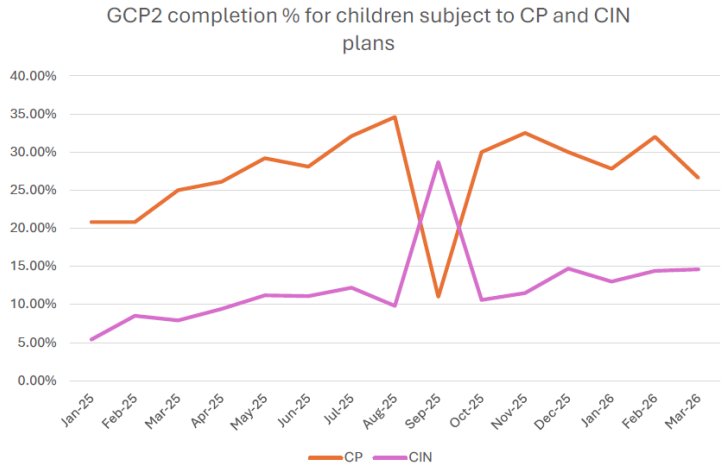


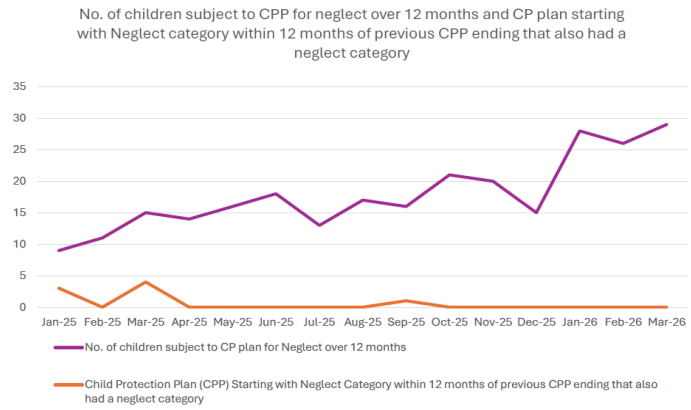


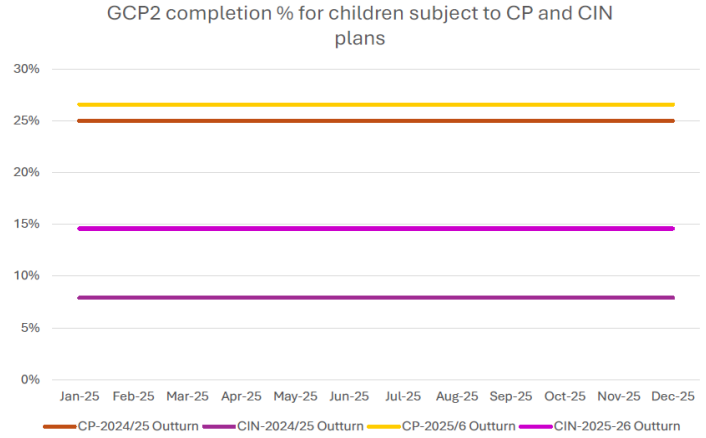


Key Data


% of whole CP cohort open for Neglect (2025-26 outturn)
30.90%
69.10%
Neglect Cohort
Rest of whole CP Cohort


GCP2 completion % for children subject to CP and CIN plans
40.00%
35.00%
30.00%
25.00%
20.00%
15.00%
10.00%
5.00%
0.00%
Jan-25 Feb-25 Mar-25 Apr-25 May-25 Jun-25 Jul-25 Aug-25 Sep-25 Oct-25 Nov-25 Dec-25 Jan-26 Feb-26 Mar-26
CP
CIN


No. of children subject to CPP for neglect over 12 months and CP plan starting with Neglect category within 12 months of previous CPP ending that also had a neglect category
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Jan-25 Feb-25 Mar-25 Apr-25 May-25 Jun-25 Jul-25 Aug-25 Sep-25 Oct-25 Nov-25 Dec-25 Jan-26 Feb-26 Mar-26
No. of children subject to CP plan for Neglect over 12 months
Child Protection Plan (CPP) Starting with Neglect Category within 12 months of previous CPP ending that also had a neglect category


GCP2 completion % for children subject to CP and CIN plans
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
Jan-25 Feb-25 Mar-25 Apr-25 May-25 Jun-25 Jul-25 Aug-25 Sep-25 Oct-25 Nov-25 Dec-25
CP-2024/25 Outturn
CIN-2024/25 Outturn
CP-2025/6 Outturn
CIN-2025-26 Outturn

Whilst improvement has been seen in 2025-26, there remains a clear need for greater consistency, with only approximately 27% of children subject to a Child Protection Plan having a completed GCP2 assessment. This figure reduces further when only GCP2 assessments completed within the previous six months are considered. Moving forward, there will be increased focus on escalation by Child Protection Chairs and clear messaging back to frontline staff and managers.

Issue → Action → Evidence → Assurance → Impact on Children

Issue

Neglect in Rotherham broadly reflects the national picture, with approximately 30-35% of Child Protection Plans being categorised under neglect. The strategic intent is to equip lead professionals and partners to recognise neglect and to provide targeted support where most needed. The Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) is the Partnership's primary tool for assessing and measuring neglect in Rotherham[i]. Evidence suggests that the consistent use of GCP2 strengthens the objectivity of assessments and supports parents to understand and sustain change.

We have responded by

- Launching the Neglect Pathway in 2025
- Introducing the Neglect Screening Tool (RESHHAPED) and consolidating the GCP2 as the core assessment framework for Neglect in Rotherham
- Seeking to upskill the partnership workforce to encourage shared ownership of neglect through the increased delivery of training in both tools, to a broader range of professionals than previously reached.
- Holding a Partnership Conference in order to engage and galvanise a whole-borough approach.
- Adapting neglect and cumulative harm training for 2026-27 to include holding difficult conversations and motivating change.

Evidence of change

- We have seen an increase in the number of practitioners trained in GCP2, especially amongst education colleagues.
- Education colleagues now attend the delivery and working group and have been involved in case learning over the year
- Increased use of GCP2 by social workers, although there remains significant scope for improvement.
- Increased awareness evidenced through audits and practitioner feedback.

Assurance position

While implementation has been successful, audit findings demonstrate inconsistent completion of GCP2 assessments. The Partnership therefore has **reasonable assurance** that neglect is being identified earlier, but further evidence is required to demonstrate improved outcomes for children.

Impact on children

At present, there is limited evidence demonstrating direct impact on outcomes for children in Rotherham. The neglect groups have laid the groundwork for greater recognition of neglect and pathways have been adopted in the identification and assessment of the impact on individual children. These measures will provide a consistent approach across Rotherham which should support us to identify good practice and to target any relevant remedial activity. Most importantly it is anticipated that this consistency will result in greater turnaround when neglect is seen, which will reduce the long-term impact of neglect on children.

Priorities for 2026-27

As the foundations for addressing Neglect have been established, the RSCP will seek to retire this area as a strategic priority in 2027. This will give capacity for partners to develop new strategic priorities. Oversight of neglect practice will remain important to the Partnership and it may be that the working group will continue, feeding into PPL in the future. However, several areas for development remain in the plan for neglect for 2026-27.

- The development of a clear pathway and supporting guidance for recognising Educational Neglect has been identified as a priority, this is evidenced through audit and oversight activity and takes into account the action plan in respect of Child A (2025)
- The roll out of the RESHHAPED screening Tool will continue – At present this is to schools and early years settings. There are plans to extend to Nursing/clinical settings, alongside colleges. Completion of GCP2 assessments will be incorporated within Section 175 assurance processes.
- Audit activity will support the NeDG in understanding the impact of GCP2 completion on outcomes for children.
- 8 sessions of GCP2 training will be offered
- Continued public awareness campaign
- How do practitioners understand the lived experience behind the presenting concerns?

Priority: Safeguarding in Education

Introduction from Strategic Chair – Niall Devlin, Service Director, Education, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

As Chair of the Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group (SEDG), I am pleased to report strong progress over the past year in developing a more cohesive and effective multi-agency safeguarding partnership. The group has increasingly demonstrated the benefits of joined-up working, with improved information sharing, strong engagement from schools and partners, and a growing confidence in collaborative approaches to safeguarding challenges.

A number of significant achievements have been delivered. The development of the Safeguarding Education Risk Assessment (SERA) represents a major success, providing a practical safeguarding tool that has been designed to integrate seamlessly into existing suspension and exclusion processes. The group has also played an important role in supporting the promotion of the Beyond Boundaries Harmful Sexual Behaviour Tool for schools, reflecting our commitment to ensuring that school partners can deliver safety. Progress has also been made in developing a shared understanding of educational neglect, with partners agreeing a broad

commitment to offering helpful indicators and guidance to support recognition and intervention. In addition, the continued development of safeguarding supervision guidance demonstrates increasing recognition of the importance of staff wellbeing and trauma-informed practice across education settings.

The group continues to benefit from strong attendance and engagement, enabling it to respond to a wide range of strategic and operational safeguarding issues. Our Working Group is chaired by a DSL for a local Multi Academy Trust. Strengths in the wider system enhanced over the year include robust arrangements for identifying and tracking children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those not accessing full-time education, ensuring vulnerable children are identified and followed up appropriately. Regular oversight of these areas is a core function of the delivery group.

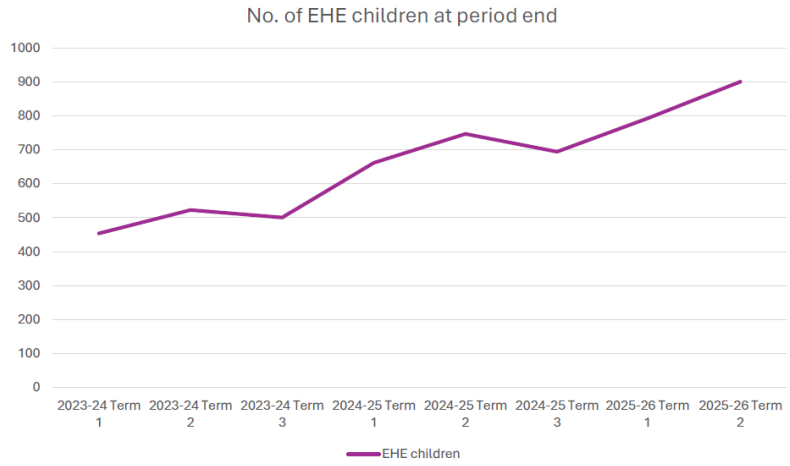
Despite this positive progress, a recurring theme throughout the year has been the distinction between children being visible within data systems and being truly seen, understood and heard. While information is available across a range of agencies, further work is required to bring this together to create a comprehensive understanding of children's experiences, risks and vulnerabilities, particularly where multiple factors intersect.

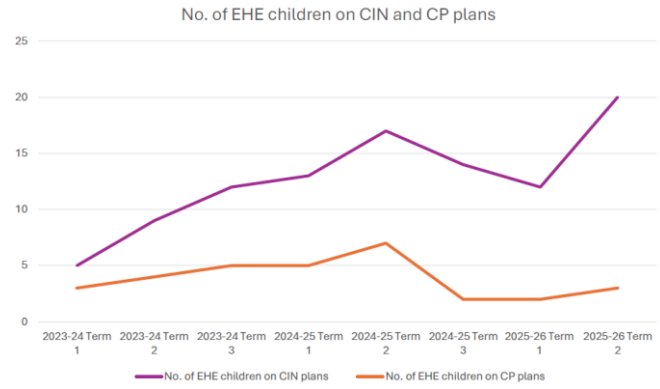
Performance data demonstrates that the system is effective at identifying and tracking vulnerable children; however, our challenge is to move beyond visibility and use available information more effectively to develop meaningful insight and action. Particular attention is needed to ensure cumulative vulnerabilities are recognised and to improve our understanding of children who may not engage with education systems through traditional routes.

Looking ahead, the group supports the proposal to broaden its contribution to the wider Children Out of Sight agenda. Members are keen to retain the group's strong operational focus while expanding its remit through targeted task-and-finish groups to explore specific themes in greater depth. Central to this future development is a shared commitment to moving children from being simply visible, to being seen, heard and understood, ensuring that their experiences and voices shape both practice and system design. This provides a clear and ambitious direction for the group's ongoing work.

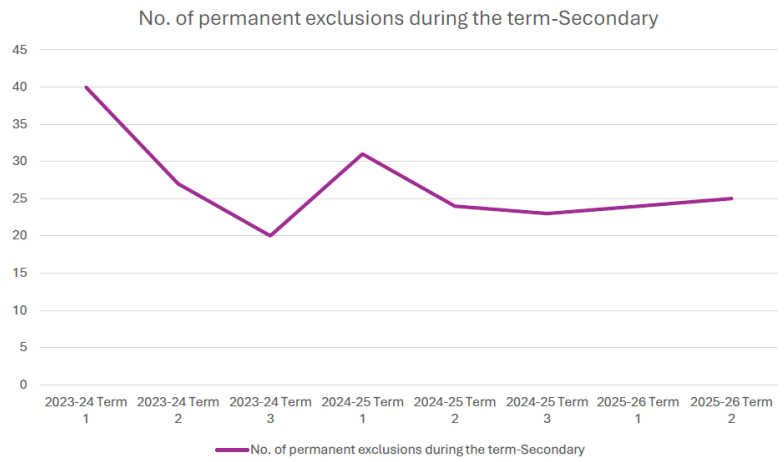
Key Data

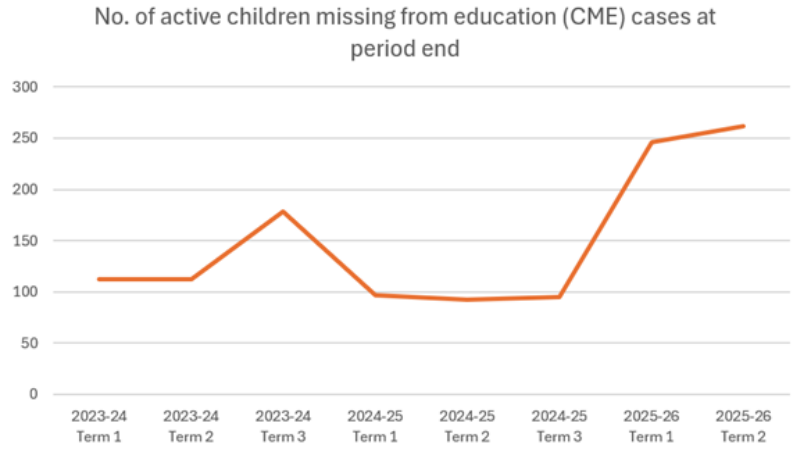
As can be seen from the data below, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of children missing education and those electively home educated (EHE). This mirrors the national picture with 126,000 children in EHE on census in autumn 2025 rising from 111,700 the previous year, and from 92,000 in 2023/24[ii]. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has thematic analysis 'Safeguarding Children in Elective Home Education'[iii] has guided the work of the SEDG throughout 2025-26 in focusing attention of those children less visible to services. The report notes that professionals can miss opportunities to assess children's welfare when there is limited contact with agencies, increasing the risk that significant harm remains unseen for long periods. It calls for stronger multi-agency information sharing, professional curiosity, and oversight of children who are electively home educated, particularly where there are existing safeguarding concerns. The SEDG has facilitated greater collaboration in the governance of children known to be EHE and where there are potential concerns for their education. As graph (G) demonstrates, we have seen a rise in the numbers of children EHE being open to children's services, suggesting a likely combination of the risks to children EHE being considered and referred when necessary, and that those children receiving intervention have an increased likelihood of being EHE. The SEDG therefore remains heavily committed to oversight of this area of practice.

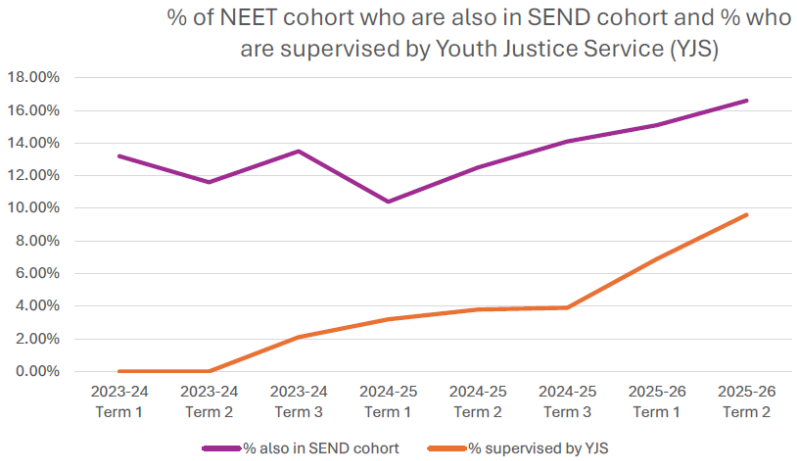




(G)


No. of permanent exclusions during the term-Secondary
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
2023-24 Term 1
2023-24 Term 2
2023-24 Term 3
2024-25 Term 1
2024-25 Term 2
2024-25 Term 3
2025-26 Term 1
2025-26 Term 2
No. of permanent exclusions during the term-Secondary


No. of active children missing from education (CME) cases at period end
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
2023-24 Term 1
2023-24 Term 2
2023-24 Term 3
2024-25 Term 1
2024-25 Term 2
2024-25 Term 3
2025-26 Term 1
2025-26 Term 2


% of NEET cohort who are also in SEND cohort and % who are supervised by Youth Justice Service (YJS)
18.00%
16.00%
14.00%
12.00%
10.00%
8.00%
6.00%
4.00%
2.00%
0.00%
2023-24 Term 1
2023-24 Term 2
2023-24 Term 3
2024-25 Term 1
2024-25 Term 2
2024-25 Term 3
2025-26 Term 1
2025-26 Term 2
% also in SEND cohort
% supervised by YJS

A rise in NEET figures is an emerging concern as traditionally these have been lower in Rotherham than the national average, alongside the rise in children missing education in September 2025 the RSCP has completed audit activity to explore the role of safeguarding professionals in this space.

The increase in CME figures at the start of the academic year reflects improvements in practice, monitoring and reporting rather than a rise in children becoming missing from education. As schools reopened, referrals increased significantly, driven by higher levels of pupil movement, strengthened tracking arrangements introduced through the refreshed CME policy, and enhanced identification of vulnerable cohorts, including children within unsuitable EHE arrangements. The rise is consistent with trends reported by regional partners and demonstrates the effectiveness of more robust processes in identifying, tracking and safeguarding children.

Issue → Action → Evidence → Assurance → Impact on Children

Issue

As demonstrated by the data and our audit activity, the SEDG has become increasingly concerned for those children not seen in school for a variety of reasons. There are several areas of cross cutting concern from mental health to neglect and child sexual abuse. There is also a balance to be struck between ensuring safety for those most vulnerable, whilst respecting the rights of families to seek their own solutions to educational issues and concerns.

Action

In addressing these issues, the SEDG has overseen

- The creation of a new Safeguarding in Education Risk Assessment (SERA) to be launched Autumn term 2026, this assessment is for school staff to complete when a suspension or exclusion is likely. It is intended to provide a preventative lens on issues such as increased risk of exploitation, domestic abuse and neglect for those children no longer in school.
- The group has also increased oversight of the Education Governance Group, with twice yearly assurance reports into the SEDG.
- A new Educational Neglect Policy is due for launch in 2026-27, this will support practitioners to respond to issues that may not appear to be a safeguarding concern but will have a significantly detrimental impact on the child if not addressed.
- The learning from Operation Lemur Alpha (in respect of the Hesley Group investigations [3]) has been reviewed and will be directly supported through training and information from the review authors.

Evidence

- Audit activity and review findings have demonstrated that children 'not seen' can have abuse effectively hidden from professionals, the activity planned is intended to increase the reach of oversight by partners in protecting children. The increased grip of those children at Governance Group has resulted in increased multi agency information sharing and protective action where needed. We have seen an increase in children open to Social Care (alongside increasing numbers of children home educated).

Assurance of Impact on Children

- As demonstrated, partners now have greater visibility of vulnerable children, whilst much of the activity is due for launch in 2026-27, the impact of this strategic priority in just over 2 years appears positive with more evidence and data to support this view coming on stream next year.

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-with-disabilities-in-residential-settings

- In responding to increased numbers of children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour in schools (based on anecdotal feedback from SYP), the RSCP has introduced the 'Beyond Referrals' toolkit [4] so that school staff are supported in addressing and mitigating risk in school settings. This sits alongside protective measures in relation to Domestic Abuse (Operation Encompass) and Neglect (RESHHAPED screening tool), offering DSLs tailored guidance in identifying and planning against risk.

Priorities for 2026-27

The value of this group has been clearly demonstrated during the year, as partners have been able to create guidance and support to over 140 school and education settings in the borough. As stated, the group has also delivered in focusing upon those children not seen in a school setting and this remains a heavy focus in 2026-27, with numbers increasing. New guidance in relation to information sharing is likely to impact positively on partners' ability to ensure that children are safe and this group will develop core guidance with alongside this. Key deliverables for 2026-27 are

- Improved visibility of children's voice into the SEDG process
- Enhanced processes to share information regarding vulnerable children
- A key focus on the transition of vulnerable young people into adulthood, to include adult services at a strategic level
- Training and support to education partners in respect of online harms following the launch of the Online Safety Act and increased expectations around filtering, monitoring and online safety governance by schools.
- Learning to be implemented in relation to Operation Lemur Alpha, alongside strategic planning to ensure that children placed specialist provision are safeguarded. This will also take into account children with SEND
- Alongside the launch of Families First Partnership Programme changes, the SEDG will oversee the impact of renewed continuum of need guidance and a partnership model which supports intervention at the earliest opportunity

[4] Beyond Referrals Toolkit | Contextual Safeguarding

Priority: Child Exploitation

Introduction from Strategic Chair – Anna Sedgewick, Superintendent - Rotherham Command, South Yorkshire Police

Our journey as a partnership has been well publicised and rightly scrutinised. We recognise that this scrutiny reflects the seriousness of child exploitation and the expectation that we must deliver better outcomes for children, young people, and their communities. Over recent years, the partnership has made significant improvements through stronger collaboration, greater accountability, and a shared commitment to safeguarding. We have made important progress, but there is no room for complacency. Child exploitation remains a serious and evolving threat, and we must continue our journey of improvement with determination and urgency.
We know that many of our communities experience significant deprivation and disadvantage, which can increase vulnerability to exploitation. We have therefore reviewed and refreshed our work plan, simplifying our objectives and actions and adopting a clear focus on impact. This strategy prioritises prevention, the effective identification of children and young people at risk, and the timely protection and support of those who need our help.
By working together, listening to the voices of children and young people, and keeping safeguarding at the centre of everything we do, we will continue to strengthen our response and create safer communities for all children and young people.

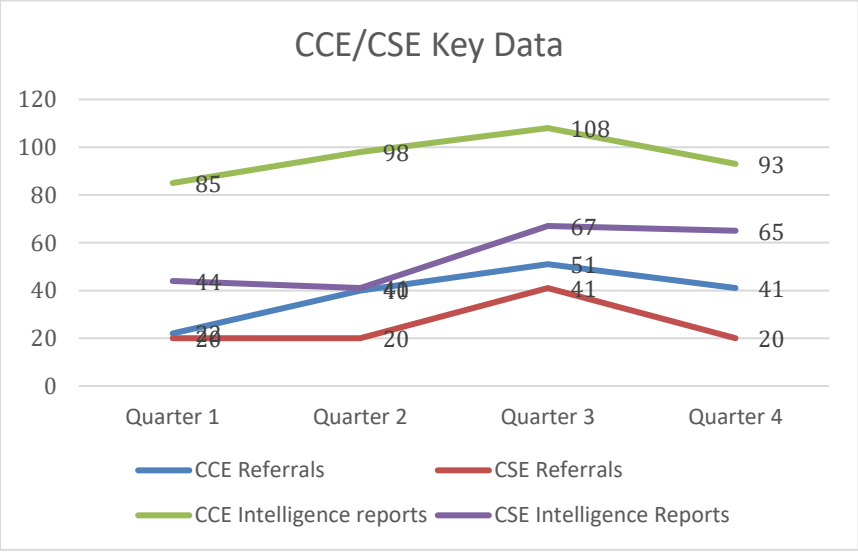
The Group is proud to have:

- *Launched the Harm Outside the Home (HOtH) pathway phase one, this enables the provision of child protection conference style meetings for individual young people. The meetings engage key partners across the statutory and community sectors in keeping children safe and disrupting exploitation. Parents and young people are full partners in the meeting and contribute directly to the safety planning*
- *Established a clear and relevant data set, with plans to extend the information to include disruption activity and offender profiles in 2026-27*
- *Taken part in Operation Duxford, targeting information at takeaways, taxis, pubs and licensed shops*
- *Completed the learning review of Child B with actions arising largely met*

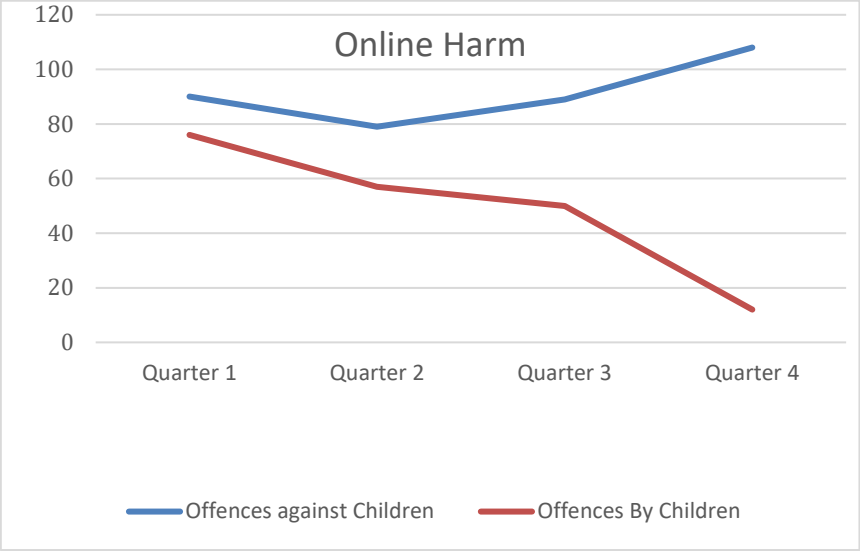
- *Streamlined the CE workplan, focusing on prevention activity and pursuit of offenders, with greater confidence achieved around preparation and protection*

In planning for 2026/27 the data below reveals a partnership that is increasingly effective at identifying child exploitation and vulnerability. However, the complexity of need, persistence of medium and high-risk cases, continued levels of missing episodes and increasing online harm indicate that exploitation remains a significant safeguarding challenge within Rotherham. The partnership's focus for 2026/27 should therefore move beyond identification alone and towards earlier intervention, targeted disruption, reduction of repeat vulnerability, and improved outcomes for children experiencing exploitation.

Key data



As can be seen, the majority of activity in relation to exploitation is criminal in nature with a total of 154 referrals in year, compared to 101 CSE referrals. Over the course of the year the launch of the Harm Outside the Home (HOtH) Pathway has supported multi agency planning for those young people considered at risk of significant harm through exploitation. This intervention enables plans to be multi agency and multi faceted in nature, addressing not only individual issues but also wider contextual risk. The spike in CSE referrals in Q3 was generated through targeted activity by SYP for Operation Saros Charlie.



We can see that online offences against children have risen over the course of 2025-26. Online/phone offences remain the most prevalent reason for contacting police regarding exploitation.

In respect of online offences against children, 55% of victims were female, 41% were male and 4% were unrecorded. The majority of these offences were –

- Harassment - 41%
- Sexual Activity with a Child Under 16 years - 11%, Sexual Activity with a Child Under 13 years – 7%
- Other Misc. Sexual Offences - 7%
- Malicious Communications - 6%

For those offences by children, 54% of suspects were male and 39% were female with the remaining 7% classed as unrecorded. 48% of suspects were recorded as 'Acquaintance/Other Known Relationship', 24% were a stranger and 10% were the ex-partner of a Heterosexual Relationship. The Majority of offences recorded were Harassment 48%, and Obscene Publications 19%.

Issue → Action → Evidence → Assurance → Impact on Children

Issue

The Child Exploitation safeguarding space continues to offer challenge across the partnership, bringing non- traditional partners into focus in addressing extra familial harm and risk. In addition to this the ever-changing nature of online harm adds complexity to

investigations and risks to children in a variety of circumstances. The challenge facing services is no longer simply identification. Increasingly, the challenge is sustaining intensive intervention and reducing risk over time. Relationship building remains key in working directly with children and in generating a truly collaborative multi agency response.

Action

Guided by research into contextual safeguarding we have created and launched the Harm Outside the Home (HOtH) pathway. Part one of this will focus on activity in relation to specific children at risk of exploitation to ensure that they receive a targeted and tailored plan via a 'child protection conference' approach. Further work will explore the community aspect of HOtH with partners delivering a preventative impact through existing intelligence and disruption activity.

We have also learned a great deal from the review into Child B, the plans from this confidential report have contributed to our understanding of contextual risk and engagement with families. This action plan from this review remains live and directly impacts on our delivery.

Evidence

The HOtH Exploitation conferences launched late in this reporting period. At the time of writing approximately 12 young people have been through this process. Feedback from parents and young people is positive, with their contributions informing the meeting.

Assurance of Impact on Children

The Rotherham Multi Agency EVOLVE team has worked with 119 young people during 2025-26, with 127 young people having involvement ending in the same period. Risk assessment activity remains robust with 279 assessments (young people often having more than 1 assessment) completed. As can be seen from the table below, criminal exploitation is the most prevalent category, with children at risk of both CSE and CCE being seen at most risk.

Risk Assessment Type by Outcome	Low	Medium	High	No Level Recorded	% at high risk	TOTAL
Not completed	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*		***2***
CCE	*31*	*79*	*13*	1	10.4	***124***
CSE	*31*	*42*	*4*	1	5.1	***78***
CSE and CCE	*7*	*38*	*13*	0	22.4	***58***
No Risk Identified	*15*	*2*	*0*	0		***17***
TOTALS	**84**	**161**	**30**	**4**	**10.7**	**279**

CEDG Priorities for 2026-27

In 2026/27 the CEDG will

1. Actively seek to reduce repeat missing episodes

For the coming year the CEDG will focus on:

- Children in Care
- Repeat missing cohorts.
- 15–17-year-olds.
- Placement stability and contextual safeguarding responses.

This will help us to plan activity to reduce the likelihood of CE and to support transition planning into adulthood.

2. Strengthen disruption activity

We will develop a partnership disruption framework that measures:

- Perpetrator disruption.
- Location disruption.
- County Lines disruption.
- Online exploitation disruption.

This will help us to understand how our activity contributes to reducing exploitation and improving outcomes for children.

3. Respond to growing online harm

We will implement:

- An enhanced online safety package for all children in Rotherham through school-based education programmes and information for children educated at home
- We will enhance our communication offer to support greater parent and carer awareness
- We will work alongside our colleagues in the SEDG to deliver specific work on online harassment, grooming and coercion

This will support increased awareness as online risks develop

4. Improve outcomes from investigations

The CEDG will review:

- Longstanding investigations through police data and scrutiny in the group.
- Barriers to prosecution, ensuring that young people help us to understand what additional support is required.
- Victim engagement processes, through appreciative inquiry, learning from when convictions have been successful.
- Investigation oversight arrangements, to ensure that partners are up to date with plans and changes as far as possible.

This will enable the partnership to grip the complexities of long-term criminal investigation, so that we can ensure positive collaboration with victims, their families and as professionals

5. Focus on high-risk and dual-exploitation cohorts

The CEDG will gain a greater understanding of how those at greatest risk are protected, targeting partner activity towards:

- Children experiencing both CSE and CCE.
- Children in Care.
- Older adolescents.
- Children repeatedly presenting through missing, exploitation and criminality indicators.
- How do we ensure young people influence their own safety planning?

This will provide assurance that our processes are sufficiently robust and that we are actively minimising risk through shared activity and involvement of young people.

6. Deliver greater evidence of disruption activities

Disruption is at the centre of our strategic plan to protect the children in Rotherham, in 2026/27 we will work to understand

- The use of Police powers and resources to target specific individuals and create a common theme of disruption and pursuit in Rotherham. We will develop clear expectations in relation to the pursuit of criminals and the use of intelligence.
- We will also continue to develop links with private sectors partners in licensed and unlicensed premises, community settings, taxis and building sites. This will contribute to increased information sharing and earlier identification of risk through training activity and an accessible online presence.

- We will ensure that the communication between CETG, MACE and CEDG is enhanced, with a clear line of sight to the CEDG and Executive. This will assist us to demonstrate how thematic information informs the group's objectives and that OCG activity can be tracked and disrupted with an increased lens on safeguarding.

This activity will hold partners to greater account in respect of understanding the criminal networks in Rotherham and how this impacts on our young people, through this grip and analysis we will reiterate our aim to make Rotherham a challenging environment for potential exploiters across the safeguarding space.

Priority: Practice, Performance and Learning (PPL)

Introduction from Strategic Chair – Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

In 2025-26, the Practice Standards Group refined its focus to concentrate on learning activity and the review of policy and procedure. Alongside this, a refreshed RSCP website has improved user experience to better reach practitioners and the public. We have strengthened our oversight through thematic reports from the LADO, which inform training and wider safeguarding activity.

The Audit Working Group held five multi-agency audits with a breadth of representation from partner agencies and a carefully tailored focus on areas of need and/or critical national learning. This has allowed Training Subgroup to respond dynamically to areas where practitioners need more support and guidance. We have seen expansion in our training offer in readiness for 2026-27 with increased capacity to deliver Graded Care Profile Training and an update of Neglect and Professional Curiosity training, with an enhanced focus on establishing collaboration with families and motivating change. We have extensive plans in place for conference activity in 2026 alongside preparations for the launch of a Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and Pathway.

We have developed a revised Resolving Professional Differences protocol to encourage informal resolution but provide a framework when practitioners are unable to find consensus about what is best for a child, or where there may be an unaddressed risk to a child. A healthy safeguarding system involves respectful challenge, and the protocol now involves facilitation by RSCP in the later stages of the protocol and tracking of themes to inform system change. In addition to this we have also established clear guidelines for

managing the Rapid Review Process and potential case reviews. A significant strength in the delivery of PPL is the partner activity and commitment to our various subgroups. There is a huge amount of partner goodwill and peer support across the partnership and this is demonstrated in the achievements outlined above and evidenced in this report.

With the inception of the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) changes due for April 2027, PPL will track and support partnership activity in relation to communication with partners, the development of a new continuum of need and supporting guidance, and the promotion and development of family group decision making (FGDM).

Key Activity

The PPL delivery group oversees all learning, training and quality assurance activity through three working groups:

- Audit Working Group
- Training and Development Group
- Practice Standards Group

The delivery group also oversees case review activity and is responsible for the Rapid Review and notification process.

Case Reviews

The RSCP received 5 referrals for CSPRs between April 2025 and March 2026, these referrals were subject to Head of Service and DSP oversight; none progressed to Rapid Review or national notification

Action plans from two previous learning reviews undertaken prior to this reporting period, continued to inform our safeguarding practice.

Child A action plan– linked to NeDG and SEDG

Child B Learning and planning – linked to CEDG

Audits

Four thematic audits have been completed in the year 2025-26.

Quarter 1- (May 2025) - Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse

Quarter 2- (October 2025) - The Multi-agency Response In Child Protection Medicals

Quarter 3- (November 2025) - Parental Substance Misuse and the Impact on Children

Quarter 4 - (January 2026) - Domestic Abuse

In addition, a targeted audit and review of the Child Sexual Abuse Risk Assessment Panel was completed, with feedback provided directly to CYPS.

Findings

Key Learning Themes:

Learning for practice was identified in the following areas and has informed the learning and development action plan for 2026-27.

- Effective consideration of family history, previous incidents, patterns of risk and family networks will strengthen professional curiosity and improve risk analysis and better inform analysis of risk.
- Improving cross-border information sharing processes in all agencies, to effect timely protection of children and families from risk and harm.
- Senior leaders in all agencies should drive improvement in attendance on the training and routine completion of GCP2 to assess risk and understand the impact on children of neglect and cumulative harm.
- Exploring the implications for children when adults display challenging behaviour or do not engage with the support being offered should involve professionals adopting a 'trust but verify' or a 'respectful uncertainty' approach to the family's situation and concerns.
- Professionals need greater and stronger persistence with reluctant parents, especially around substance misuse.

- Continued evidence of consistent recording of children's voice and impact of diversity, intersectionality and unique characteristics.

Actions for 2026-27:

- Partners to promote and facilitate professionals/practitioner attendance on RSCP training and embed the routine completion of GCP2 assessments and screening tool, with an enhanced offer for 2026/27.
- We will launch and promote the Harm Outside the Home Pathway and review impact in December 2026.
- New partnership Neglect/Cumulative Harm and Professional Curiosity training will be delivered through 2026 to specifically support challenging conversations, respectful challenge and the understanding of long-term harm
- Bespoke Child Sexual Abuse training to be commissioned and delivered in 2026-27
- Planned audit activity in respect of the involvement of males in assessments, specifically where domestic abuse is a concern
- Develop joint protocols between police and social care, promoting active use of plans by all professionals, and enhancing training for cultural competence and identification of abuse.

Audit Activity planned for 2026 – 2027:

Quarter 1 Missing-CIC

Quarter 2 Pre-Birth Practice

Quarter 3 Working with Men

Quarter 4 Education and Exclusion /CSA

Training and Learning

The RSCP has continued to provide a core offer of training for colleagues in 2025-26. To date, 773 staff have attended courses as detailed in the table below:

Course	Sessions	Staff attended
Child Exploitation and Harm Outside the Home	**4**	**56**
Professional Curiosity	**2**	**30**
Cumulative Harm and Child Neglect	**3**	**66**
The Role of Designated Safeguarding Leads and Rotherham Processes (Early Help and Children's Social Care)	**4**	**42** (4th session booked for 17/6)
Education Safeguarding Forum	**3**	**172**
LADO and Allegations Management	**3**	**72**
Graded Care Profile 2	**6**	**63**
Multiagency Level 3 Safeguarding Training and Designated Safeguarding Lead	**7**	**167**
Family Assessment of Need (FAN)	**3**	**53**
Safeguarding Against Spiritual and Ritual Abuse Specialist	**1**	**52**
Totals	**36**	**773**

In addition to this, approximately 4,400 people have successfully completed RSCP e-learning modules on Virtual College.

In November 2025, the RSCP held Safeguarding Awareness Week in conjunction with Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB). Following the launch day, we held our Neglect conference which was attended by 224 colleagues and senior leaders. This was well received and impactful with colleagues, especially the section presented by Richard Devine on 'A Relational Approach to Neglect:

Building Trust for Change'. At the end of the conference, colleagues were asked to make pledges on what they would do in the future to tackle neglect. Some of these pledges included:

- To use radical candour in practice – be caring but have direct conversations in a supportive manner.
- Expect the same opportunities for children in deprived areas as for children in wealthier areas.
- Talking about and reflecting more about poverty versus neglect.
- Using the RESHHAPED tool in practice and embedding collaborative practice.
- When requesting information to build on FANs from partners, ensure they are sharing strengths, not just negative worries.
- Relationships, collaboration, professional curiosity and challenging directly – but care, relate, empathise.
- See neglect as an 'iceberg' model – address what the causes are.

From learner feedback, the key impacts of all training provided were:

- Increased practitioner confidence
- Better multi-agency working
- Stronger safeguarding awareness
- Improved support for children and families

Issue → Action → Evidence → Assurance → Impact on Children

Issue

The PPL delivery group offers helpful grip and oversight of safeguarding activity in Rotherham and on a regional and national scale. One example is the National Panel review *Protecting Vulnerable Babies Better*. This report has highlighted how professional curiosity remains central to understanding the broader context of risk for the newborn/unborn baby. It challenges our understanding of trauma for parents and how concealment can greatly increase risk.

Evidence

In response to the report findings, PPL undertook benchmarking activity. The review identified a number of strengths, including established pre-birth safeguarding procedures, effective multi-agency domestic abuse pathways, strong information sharing through MARAC and MAPPA, and positive partnership working across age groups.

Assurance

The exercise also highlighted key areas for development, including strengthening support for parents following child removal, improving trauma-informed and Think Family approaches across services, enhancing engagement with fathers and male carers, improving responses to families who move between local authority areas, and strengthening understanding of children as direct victims of domestic abuse. Priority actions have been incorporated into partnership improvement planning to further strengthen safeguarding arrangements and improve outcomes for vulnerable babies and their families.

Impact on Children

A refresh of the pre-birth protocol will be overseen by PPL in 2026/27. This will support greater collaboration and information sharing, including enhanced information sharing with probation and mental health services.

4. SAFEGUARDING SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS AND GOVERNANCE

Overall Safeguarding Assurance

During 2025-26, the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership has continued to demonstrate that safeguarding arrangements are effective and supported by strong multi-agency leadership, engagement and accountability. External inspection outcomes, stable partnership governance arrangements, and evidence from audits, reviews and performance activity provide assurance that partners are working together effectively to identify risk, protect children and drive improvement across the safeguarding system.

The Partnership has made significant progress in strengthening its strategic response to some of the most prevalent safeguarding issues affecting children in Rotherham. During the year, new pathways have been established in relation to Neglect and Harm Outside the Home, safeguarding arrangements within education have been strengthened, and partners have increased their collective focus on learning, quality assurance and professional challenge. Evidence from audit activity, practitioner feedback, inspection findings and scrutiny arrangements suggests that the workforce is increasingly confident in recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns.

The Partnership has **strong assurance** in the following areas:

- Strategic leadership and governance arrangements
- Multi-agency engagement and attendance across partnership structures
- Learning, audit and review processes which are increasingly influencing service development
- Progress in the development of safeguarding pathways and practice guidance
- Partners' ability to identify children experiencing risk and vulnerability

The Partnership has **reasonable assurance, with further improvement required**, in:

- The consistent implementation and impact of the Graded Care Profile 2 assessment and intervention tools

- Demonstrating the impact of strategic activity on outcomes for children through refined data analysis
- Ensuring that learning from audits, reviews and training is consistently embedded across all agencies
- Understanding and responding to cumulative vulnerability, particularly where multiple risks intersect

The Partnership has identified the following **areas of emerging concern and strategic focus**:

- The continued increase in the number of children who are Electively Home Educated
- Children who are less visible to universal services, including those missing education, NEET, privately fostered or educated outside mainstream settings
- The growing prevalence of online harm, harassment, exploitation and technology-enabled abuse
- The need to strengthen the voice, influence, scrutiny and lived experience of children and families within strategic planning and assurance activity
- Emerging national learning in relation to vulnerable babies, family help and the safety of children in residential care settings
- The dedicated priority of intrafamilial child sexual abuse

A key theme emerging throughout the year has been the distinction between children being visible to services and being genuinely seen, heard and understood. Across all areas of partnership activity, we have found evidence that systems are increasingly effective at identifying vulnerable children. However, the Partnership recognises that further work is required to ensure that information held across agencies is translated into a shared understanding of children's lived experiences, risks and protective factors. This principle has underpinned the Partnership's priorities for 2026-27.

RSCP Executive Group: Strategic Leadership, Oversight and Partnership Assurance

The RSCP Executive Group provides strategic leadership for safeguarding children across Rotherham, bringing together senior representatives from the Local Authority, Police, Health and the Independent Scrutineer to drive partnership priorities, oversee performance and ensure collective accountability. The Executive Group acts as the main decision-making and assurance forum for

the Partnership, maintaining oversight of safeguarding activity, reviewing emerging risks and identifying opportunities for system-wide improvement.

During 2025/26, the Executive Group has played a significant role in influencing safeguarding practice and policy across the partnership. The Group has overseen the work of the Child Exploitation, Neglect, Safeguarding in Education, and Performance, Practice and Learning Delivery Groups, receiving performance updates, providing strategic challenge and commissioning further activity where improvements were required. Executive meetings are held bi-monthly and have been fully attended by all DSPs in 2025-26. The meetings have provided enhanced oversight of Delivery Group activity via the chairs' updates which are provided in advance, with a specific focus on a priority at each meeting. This process has also supported the influence of the Executive in addressing any areas for resolution or escalation.

The Executive Group has also provided leadership in relation to emerging safeguarding priorities. During the reporting period, it reviewed findings from a multi-agency audit on intrafamilial child sexual abuse and commissioned the development of a dedicated partnership strategy and task-and-finish group to improve awareness, practice and outcomes for children affected by child sexual abuse. This demonstrates the Group's ability to identify gaps, respond to learning and establish new strategic priorities to address areas of risk.

A key function of the Executive Group is ensuring that learning from safeguarding reviews, audits and frontline practice translates into measurable improvement. The Group has maintained oversight of local child safeguarding practice reviews, monitored implementation of action plans, scrutinised thematic findings from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service, and challenged partners to improve information sharing, attendance at child protection processes and compliance with safeguarding expectations. The Executive Group has further demonstrated its strategic influence through oversight of the national Families First Partnership Programme, ensuring Rotherham is well positioned to respond to national reforms while maintaining a focus on local needs. It has also maintained oversight of partnership performance through the development of dashboards, scorecards and exception reporting, strengthening the partnership's ability to identify trends, monitor impact and target improvement activity.

Overall, the Executive Group provides an effective forum for senior leaders to work collectively to safeguard children, offering strategic direction, scrutiny, challenge and assurance across the multi-agency safeguarding system. Its work supports continuous improvement, drives accountability and ensures that safeguarding remains a shared responsibility across all partner agencies in Rotherham.

Independent Scrutiny

The Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership has an Independent Chair and Scrutineer who performs two key roles that are essential to the effective operation of the Partnership that are essential to its operation. The chair and scrutineer coordinate the activity across the partnership on behalf of both the DSPs and LSPs. The key roles that the chair and scrutineer ensure are delivered are:

- The functions required under the MASA and WT26 are complied with by all the relevant agencies and partners.
- The relevant organisations are delivering to the expectations of the partnership and are actively contributing.
- The governance is functioning, and there is a culture of accountability, through high support and high challenge.
- The approach to safeguarding is collaborative and expands beyond the partnership to other statutory boards such as the RSAB and SRP.
- That local learning and learning from National reviews and work are embedded into core practice.
- The wider partnership and other relevant stakeholders are contributing to safeguarding across Rotherham
- The audit schedule is effective, including the management of Section 11 and Section 175 audits.
- There is an effective scorecard that provides reassurance to the communities and professionals alike.

The Chair and Scrutineer also undertakes direct scrutiny with organisations and professionals to provide reassurance over the findings of audits, such as school visits and mock inspections. This helps validate that services are delivering as expected and that positive impact is being achieved within local communities.

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

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

During the last year, the chair and scrutineer has:

- Reviewed performance information and continued to enhance the scorecard across the partnership
- Developed a programme of scrutiny and audit activity to provide assurance to professionals, children and young people
- Delivered wider partnership events focused on themes of “Child Sexual Abuse” and learning from local and national reviews
- Worked with other scrutineers across the region, providing assistance, learning and identification of best practice
- Assisted with the development and launch of a number of new strategies
- Obtained reassurance from other areas for the executive, such as CDOP, LADO and the Rotherham Together Partnership
- Developed on a sub-regional level an agreed funding model for the next three years, including inflationary increases to allow effective partnership resourcing

During the next year, and through 2026 to 2027, the chair and scrutineer will:

- Review, develop and engage in the audits scheduled against the priorities
- Continue to embed and enhance the scorecard
- Enhance the voice of the children in the executive and work of the partnership, by further developing young scrutineers and their visibility
- Continue to deliver wider partnership themed events, and coordinate 4 conferences/events a year
- Continue to build relationships with relevant stakeholders and the voluntary community
- Work with partners to implement the Families First Programme

- Consider with sub-regional scrutineers more collaborative work
- Work with other statutory boards and collaborate on cross-cutting themes.

Financial Overview

The 2025/26 budget position for the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) remains strong and well controlled, with total expenditure forecast at £278.6k, marginally below the approved budget of £280.0k, representing an underspend of approximately £1.4k. Staffing vacancies in the previous year resulted in an underspend of approximately £33k, which was carried forward into 2025-26.

Core budget pressures have been effectively managed throughout the year, with staffing costs remaining broadly in line with budget despite the impact of national pay awards and associated employment costs. The Partnership continues to maintain a stable workforce structure, ensuring that resources remain focused on delivering statutory safeguarding responsibilities and supporting the Partnership's strategic priorities.

Whilst overall expenditure has remained within budget, investment in training and development activity exceeded budget by £11.1k, reflecting the Partnership's commitment to strengthening safeguarding practice across the workforce. Significant expenditure was directed towards multi-agency safeguarding training, the Neglect Conference, safeguarding awareness initiatives, specialist training programmes, and associated venue and event costs. These additional investments were offset by savings elsewhere within the budget, including underspends in areas including Independent Chair costs. No local practice reviews were commissioned during the year, resulting in a full-year underspend against that provision.

Partnership income has been received as planned from RMBC, NHS South Yorkshire ICB, the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, and Probation Services, with total income of £277.2k, as detailed in the table below.

	Budget	Actual	Forecast	Variance
Totals for Expenditure	**280,032**	**278,618**	**278,618**	**-1,414**
RMBC Contribution	-115,352	-115,352	-115,352	0
Rotherham ICB Contribution	-115,352	-115,352	-115,352	0
SYPCC Contribution	-44,475	-44,475	-44,475	0
Probation Service	-2,049	-2,049	-2,049	0
Total for Income	**-277,228**	**-277,228**	**-277,228**	**0**
Total (Core funding Shortfall)	**2,804**	**1,390**	**1,390**	**-1,414**
c/f from 2024/25	-2,804	-36,413	-36,413	-33,609
Grand Total	**0**	**-35,023**	**-35,023**	**-35,023**

The underspend in 2025-26 has been subject to the scrutiny and oversight of the Executive. Additional training support alongside the launch of the Sexual Abuse Strategy, the Families First initiative and the Training needs linked to operation Lemur Alpha will utilise these additional funds alongside the continued guidance of the DSP members.

The Voice of Children & Families

The impending changes to service delivery through the FFPP have generated significant investment in collaborating and seeking feedback from children and families for 2026-27. Consequently, plans to engage young people in the scrutiny of the Partnership have been reviewed with this activity planned for 2026-27. The RSCP is committed to ensuring that young people have meaningful

opportunities to influence oversight and scrutiny arrangements of partnership safeguarding arrangements, and these plans will deliver against this aim with the engagement of the following groups.

- Presentation of this Annual Report to Young Inspectors
- Consultation through FFPP regarding threshold/continuum of need and Family Group Decision Making
- Child Sexual Abuse Strategy Consultation
- Exploring the development of a Child Safeguarding Reference and Scrutiny Group, through existing consultation arrangements
- Continued utilisation of the RMBC Young People's Lifestyle Survey to inform planning in respect of broader safety concerns for young people.

Partnership Priorities For 2026-27

Following a year of significant progress in strengthening safeguarding arrangements, the RSCP will focus on continuing to deliver against the three current strategic priorities alongside the development of the following critical and emerging themes.

- Children Out of Sight - Improving our understanding, oversight and safeguarding response for children who are less visible to universal services, including those electively home educated, missing education, NEET or placed in alternative provision
- Exploitation and Harm Outside the Home - Continuing to develop our multi-agency response to child exploitation, reducing repeat vulnerability, strengthening disruption activity and addressing the growing threat posed by online harms
- Vulnerable Babies and Family Help - Supporting the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme, promoting earlier intervention, strengthening family-led decision-making and improving outcomes for babies and infants
- Child Sexual Abuse - Developing a partnership-wide strategy and pathway to improve identification, intervention and support for children affected by both intrafamilial and extra-familial sexual abuse

Across all priorities, the Partnership will strengthen the voice of children and families, improve multi-agency information sharing, and demonstrate measurable impact through performance, audit and learning activity.

Conclusion

The annual report shows that the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership has made significant progress and improved the services delivered to children and young people across the borough. It is focused on the main priority areas of neglect, child exploitation, and safeguarding in education, and continues to improve the services delivered. While there is always more work to do, significant progress has been made and is clearly evidenced within the annual report.

As we move into 2026-27, priorities have been reviewed across all partners and professionals, and whilst the majority will remain in place, an additional strategic priority of Child Sexual Abuse will be introduced. This will replace neglect as a strategic priority, with neglect moving into a monitoring and assurance phase with all the relevant data and practice being followed by the practice, performance and learning group, to ensure that the improvements achieved are sustained and fully embedded within practice.

In conclusion, the annual report evidences the good work delivered throughout the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership, the positive impact being achieved for children and young people and the difference that has been made to communities. The commitment of all statutory partners across the partnership is exceptional; they continue to work together to ensure all statutory requirements are met and that continuous improvements are made to the services delivered.

[i] NSPCC 2022 How the GCP2 assessment tool for neglect supports families and practitioners to achieve change | NSPCC Learning

[ii] Release home - Elective home education - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

[iii] Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education | Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

Appendix 2

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

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

This form:

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

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form. Part A status for this report: to be confirmed.

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

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025-26	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 08.10.2026	
Directorate: Children and Young People's Services	**Service area: Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Learning**
Lead Manager: Vicky Chew	**Contact number: Vicky.chew@rotherham.gov.uk**
Is this a: **Other: Annual assurance report**	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance		
Name	**Organisation**	**Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)**
Vicky Chew	RMBC – CYPS	Head of Safeguarding
Lee Durrant	RMBC – CYPS	Service and Business Manager Safeguarding Unit
Chris Seekings	RMBC – Performance	Data Analyst

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

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)

The report describes the safeguarding activity, assurance and partnership priorities of the RSCP during 2025–26. It is addressed to partners, decision-makers and the public. It does not itself change eligibility for services or make an individual decision about a child or family. Its purpose is to provide transparency, evidence progress and identify areas where partners need to improve safeguarding responses for children and young people in Rotherham.

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

The report brings together local performance information, audit findings, subgroup updates and partner contributions. It reports, among other matters, safeguarding activity, education and children out of sight, neglect, exploitation, quality assurance, learning and the voice of children and families. It identifies rising numbers of children electively home educated and emerging concerns about children missing education and NEET. It also recognises deprivation as a factor that can increase vulnerability to exploitation.

The report describes plans to strengthen children's influence, including presenting the report to Young Inspectors and developing further scrutiny and engagement arrangements in 2026–27. The report does not provide a complete partnership-wide analysis of access, experience or outcomes by all protected characteristics.

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

The report does not provide a consistent multi-agency baseline showing safeguarding access, timeliness, experience and outcomes by protected characteristic. Information on disability, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation and socio-economic circumstances is not consistently presented across all workstreams.

Children's feedback and lived experience are not yet embedded in every area of partnership assurance. The available information may therefore identify overall trends without showing whether particular groups experience different barriers or outcomes.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

The RSCP will monitor the priorities and improvement activity described in the annual report through partnership performance information, audits, subgroup reporting and scrutiny. Where lawful, proportionate and statistically meaningful, partners should disaggregate information by relevant protected characteristics and review differences in identification, access, timeliness, experience and outcomes.

Children's feedback, complaints, audit findings and service-user experience should inform the annual assurance cycle. Material gaps or unequal outcomes should be escalated through the relevant partnership governance arrangements.

Engagement undertaken with customers (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)	The report records planned engagement for 2026–27, including presenting the annual report to Young Inspectors and developing children's participation in partnership scrutiny. It also identifies consultation and engagement linked to the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and Families First Partnership Programme. These are recorded as planned activity; this analysis does not treat them as completed consultation on the annual report. Existing feedback and learning from children and families are reflected in the report, but a consistent account of engagement by protected characteristic is not available.
Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s)consulted and key findings)	The report draws on contributions from RSCP partners and subgroups, performance information, audits, review learning and practice updates. It describes multi-agency work across safeguarding, education, health, police and community settings. The report does not provide a separate staff consultation log for this equality analysis; contributors and the process used to review this analysis should be confirmed before publication.

4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups?

The annual report supports equal access to protection and support by making partnership activity, emerging needs and improvement priorities visible. It recognises that children who are out of sight of universal services, including some children who are electively home educated, missing education or NEET, may need additional safeguarding attention. It also highlights the importance of children's voice, accessible support and partnership working. A child-friendly or accessible summary would help make the report's findings more available to children and families.

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups? The report is a long, technical document and may be difficult for children, some families and people with literacy, language, communication or accessibility needs to use. If data is not routinely disaggregated, the partnership may miss unequal identification, access or outcomes. Children who are less visible to universal services may be under-represented in performance and engagement information. Reporting deprivation alongside exploitation also needs careful wording so that communities are not stigmatised.
Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers? The report provides a shared account of progress and areas for improvement, supporting scrutiny and coordinated action across agencies. Its focus on children out of sight, exploitation, neglect, education and children's voice can help partners identify barriers and strengthen support. The planned presentation to Young Inspectors and the development of children's scrutiny arrangements offer opportunities to make future assurance more accessible and informed by lived experience.
What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another) The intended effect is positive because the report promotes shared responsibility and transparent scrutiny. There is a risk that communities facing deprivation, or particular groups of children, could be described mainly through risk or deficit. The report and any summary should use balanced, non-stigmatising language, explain the limits of the available data and include children's strengths, views and experiences wherever possible.

5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan

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

Title of analysis: Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025-26
Directorate and service area: Children and Young People's Services – Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Learning
Lead Manager: Vicky Chew (to confirm)
Summary of findings:
The annual report is expected to have a positive equality impact by supporting transparency, scrutiny and improvement across the safeguarding partnership. It does not itself change services or individual entitlements. It highlights children who may be less visible to universal services and the need to strengthen children's voice and influence. The main equality limitation is that the report does not provide a consistent multi-agency picture of access, experience and outcomes by protected characteristic. Accessible communication, stronger lived-experience evidence and proportionate disaggregated monitoring should be built into the 2026–27 assurance cycle. Names of contributors and governance approvals remain to be confirmed.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Agree how the RSCP annual assurance cycle will identify and report material differences in access, experience and outcomes by protected characteristic, where data is lawful and meaningful.	**A, D, S, GR, RE, RoB, SO, PM, CPM, C, O**	**During 2026–27**
Develop an accessible child-friendly summary of the annual report and use Young Inspectors or existing participation arrangements to gather feedback on its findings.	**A, D, RE, C, O**	**During 2026–27**
Strengthen routine recording of children's views and lived experience within audit, subgroup and partnership assurance activity.	**A, D, S, GR, RE, RoB, SO, C, O**	**During 2026–27**

Review whether children who are electively home educated, missing education or NEET are represented in relevant safeguarding assurance and engagement activity.	**A, D, RE, C, O**	**During 2026–27**
Review equality evidence, feedback and actions during preparation of the next RSCP annual report.	**All**	**Annually**

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

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.

Name	Job title	Date
Vicky Chew	RSCP governance lead	14 October 2026

7. Publishing

The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date Equality Analysis completed	08.10.2026 (draft)
Report title and date	Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025-26 (publication date to be confirmed)
Publication and equality submission dates	14 October 2026

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified:			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across the Borough as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	None	No direct change to buildings or energy use is proposed.	No borough-wide building emissions impact is expected.	Use existing Council and partner venues.	No separate monitoring is proportionate.
Emissions from transport?	Unknown	Some staff travel may be associated with partnership meetings or events.	Any effect is expected to be small and limited to normal partnership activity.	Use online or hybrid meetings where suitable and combine in-person activity.	No separate carbon monitoring is proposed; travel arrangements remain within existing partner processes.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None	The report itself does not create a material change in waste. Printing may create a small amount of paper waste.	No material borough-wide waste impact is expected.	Publish digitally and print only where needed, using existing recycling arrangements.	No separate monitoring is proportionate.
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None	No impact on housing or domestic buildings is expected.	No impact on borough housing emissions is expected.	Not applicable.	No separate monitoring is proportionate.
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None	No construction or development is proposed.	No impact is expected.	Not applicable.	No separate monitoring is proportionate.
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None	No carbon capture activity is proposed.	No borough-wide carbon capture impact is expected.	Not applicable.	No separate monitoring is proportionate.

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

The annual assurance report is primarily a reporting and governance document. Its preparation and use may involve limited staff travel, meetings, digital information technology and occasional printing. These activities are expected to remain within existing arrangements and not create a material increase in emissions.

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

The impact is expected to be neutral. The annual assurance report does not propose changes to buildings, infrastructure, service delivery locations or residents' capacity to adapt to climate change.

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

The RSCP Annual Assurance Report 2025–26 is expected to have minimal direct implications for emissions. Any associated impacts are limited to staff travel, meetings, digital activity and printing. Online or hybrid meetings will be used where appropriate, the report will be shared digitally where accessible, and printing will be limited to need. No separate emissions monitoring is considered proportionate for this reporting activity. Any future service or commissioning proposal with a material carbon impact should be assessed through the relevant decision-making process.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Vicky Chew Interim Head of Safeguarding Safeguarding Unit Children and Young People's Services
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	*RSCP Annual Assurance Report 2025–26. This is a reporting and assurance document; no standalone carbon data has been used because no material direct emissions impact is expected.*
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	*N/A*
Validation	CIA 704 Louise Preston Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16th November 2026

Report Title
September 2026/27 Financial Monitoring Report

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

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report
Judith Badger, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Report Author(s)
Rob Mahon, Service Director – Financial Services
01709 254518 or rob.mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report sets out the financial position as at the end of September 2026 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first half of 2026/27.

Financial performance is central to the Council's overall performance framework and the delivery of its policy objectives. As such, this is the third in a series of regular financial monitoring reports for the current financial year to be presented to Cabinet.

Following the projected £5.9m overspend position reported to Cabinet in September 2026 within the July Financial Monitoring report, the Council has been working hard to mitigate this position and reduce any potential call on reserves at the year end. The position reported as of September 2026 factors in the mitigations that have been identified so far; further work will be needed to address the remaining overspend. Actions taken to date include grant maximisation, removal of non-essential spend where possible and balance sheet reviews to identify any historical grants and contributions held that are no longer required. The aim of this work has been to mitigate the financial overspend position, whilst minimising the impact on service delivery.

As of September 2026, the Council's forecast outturn for 2026/27 is a projected overspend of £2.9m, made up of a Directorates overspend of £7.9m, offset by a projected Central Services underspend of £5.0m. The main pressures driving this

forecast are within Social Care, largely due to market prices impacting high cost residential placements and the increasing number of people receiving support and care who have complex needs. There is also an overspend in Regeneration and Environment Directorate due to overspends in Waste Management and Home to School Transport. Detailed explanations for variances within each Directorate are provided in the main body of this report.

Following approval of the 2026/27 Budget, the global economic position has remained unsettled. Economic market sentiment has been heavily influenced by the Middle East conflict leading to escalating energy and fuel costs impacting the wider economy and creating uncertainty around inflation. These financial challenges are being regularly reviewed as part of the Council's ongoing Medium Term Financial Planning.

The report also provides an updated position on the Council's Capital Programme including a number of programme variations.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £2.9m.

2. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme.

3. Approve the capital budget variations as detailed in Section 2.17 of the report.

4. Note early payment of £3.052m grant from the Transport for City Regions (TCR) fund, as detailed in section 2.18.5 of the report.

5. Note the allocation of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Revenue Fund grant from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) as detailed in 2.24 and delegate the decision to allocate and spend all future tranches to the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy.

List of Appendices Included
Appendix 1 Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Budget and Council Tax 2026/27 Report to Council on 4th March 2026
Financial Monitoring Report to Cabinet, 6th July 2026
Financial Monitoring Report to Cabinet, 14th September 2026

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No
Council Approval Required
No
Exempt from the Press and Public
No

September 2026/27 Financial Monitoring Report

1. Background

1.1 As part of its performance and control framework the Council is required to produce regular and timely reports for the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet to keep them informed of financial performance so that, where necessary, actions can be agreed and implemented to bring expenditure in line with the approved budget for the financial year.

1.2 Delivery of the Council's Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Programme within the parameters agreed by Council is essential if the Council's objectives are to be achieved. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework.

1.3 This report is the third in a series of financial monitoring reports to Cabinet for 2026/27, setting out the projected year end revenue budget financial position in light of actual costs and income for the first half of the financial year.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Table 1 below shows, by Directorate, the summary forecast revenue outturn position.

Table 1: Forecast Revenue Outturn 2026/27 as at September 2026

Directorate	**Budget 2026/27**	**Forecast Outturn 2026/27**	**Forecast Variance over/under (-)**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**
Children and Young People Services (CYPS)	85.4	89.1	3.7
Adult Care, Housing & Public Health (ACH&PH)	157.6	159.5	1.9
Regeneration and Environment Services (R&E)	56.4	58.8	2.4
Corporate Services (CORP)	42.7	42.7	0.0
Policy Strategy & Engagement (PSE)	6.2	6.1	-0.1
Central Services (CS)	46.0	41.0	-5.0
Directorate Forecast Outturn	**394.3**	**397.2**	**2.9**
Dedicated Schools Grant			8.1
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)			(0.3)

2.2 As at September 2026, there is a forecast overspend of £2.9m. This position is made up of a Directorates overspend of £7.9m, offset by a projected Central

Services underspend of £5.0m. The Council's overspend position at this point is largely due to placement pressures within Children and Young People Services (£3.7m), the demand and high complexity of care packages in Adult Social Care (£1.9m) and overspends in the Regeneration and Environment Directorate (£2.4m), mostly in Waste Management and Home to School Transport.

2.3 Following the projected £5.9m overspend position reported to Cabinet in September 2026 within the July Financial Monitoring report, the Council has been working hard to mitigate this position and reduce any potential call on reserves at the year end. The position reported as of September 2026 factors in the mitigations that have been identified so far; further work will be needed to address the remaining overspend. Actions taken to date include grant maximisation, removal of non-essential spend where possible and balance sheet reviews to identify any historical grants and contributions held that are no longer required. The aim of this work has been to mitigate the financial overspend position, whilst minimising the impact on service delivery.

2.4 It is anticipated that the Council will be able to manage this situation and reduce the projected overspend during the course of the financial year, given successful management in previous years; however, the Council cannot forecast that improvement until clear actions have been identified. Work is being implemented at pace for maximum impact and will primarily focus on the pressures identified within social care placements and care packages.

2.5 The Budget as approved at Council on 4th March 2026 included provisions and allocations for inflation, pay award and anticipated cost pressures. These budgets are held centrally at the start of the year and allocated to services as costs are confirmed and incurred. The table below sets out the headline reasons for the movement between opening budgets and the latest budget that has been forecast against in this report.

2.6 **Table 2: Budget Movements during 2026/27**

	Opening Budget 2026/27	Pay Budget Changes / Fees & Charges Income Inflation	Contract Inflation & Central Provision Allocations to Services	Service Transfers between Directorates	Latest Budget 2026/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
CYPS	**78.4**	-1.6	8.7	-0.1	**85.4**
ACH&PH	**149.1**	-1.4	10.0	-0.1	**157.6**
R&E	**56.7**	-1.2	1.1	-0.2	**56.4**
CORP	**41.3**	-1.2	0.6	2.0	**42.7**
PSE	**6.3**	-0.3	-0.0	0.2	**6.2**
CS	**62.5**	5.7	-20.4	-1.8	**46.0**
TOTAL	**394.3**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**394.3**

2.7 The Council's Financial Outturn report 2025/26 reported that £0.4m of prior year savings remained undelivered. In addition, the Budget and Council Tax report 2026/27 included the delivery of £3.2m of new savings, giving £3.6m to be delivered during 2026/27. Currently, £2.5m of delivery has been secured. The table below shows the total amount of all savings to be delivered during 2026/27 and the amount that has been delivered to date.

Table 3: Delivery of Agreed Savings

Directorate	**2026/27 Saving to be delivered £'000**	**Secured as at 30th September 2026 £'000**	**Still to be delivered £'000**
Corporate Services	704	704	0
Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	1,089	237	852
Children's and Young People Services	800	800	0
Regeneration and Environment	1,040	720	320
Total	**3,633**	**2,461**	**1,172**

2.8 Activity is ongoing to deliver the remaining £1.2m of savings that relate to Working Age Adults £0.9m, Waste Route Optimisation £0.3m and Waleswood £40k. The following sections provide further information regarding the Council's current forecast overspend of £2.9m, the key reasons for forecast under or overspends within Directorates and the progress of savings delivery.

2.9 **Children and Young People Services Directorate (£3.7m forecast overspend)**

2.9.1 Children and Young People Services is forecasting a budget pressure of £3.7m at the end of September 2026, a reduction of £1.8m compared with the July position reported. The improved forecast position is attributable to the budget recovery actions put in place to mitigate CYPS cost pressures. The overall forecast overspend is primarily driven by continued pressures relating to Children in Care placement costs. The main budget pressures within the Directorate are outlined below.

2.9.2 A budget pressure of £6.0m is currently forecast against the Children in Care (CiC) placement budget, which is consistent with the position reported in July 2026.

2.9.3 The following are key points to note in the latest children in care placements forecast:

- The number of children in care reduced from 481 in July to 475 at the end of September, as a number of children have exited the care system. The decrease was primarily attributable to reductions in the use of external residential children's homes and supported accommodation placements.

- External residential placements remain the main source of placement budget pressure, with 43 children placed in external children's homes compared with 48 in July. This reflects continued progress in step-down and permanence planning; however, increasing demand for high-cost residential provision for children with complex needs continues to impact the budget.
- Occupancy levels in Council-owned children's homes stood at 72% at the end of September, compared with 76% previously. Four beds remain vacant to ensure appropriate matching and maintain placement stability for existing occupants. Work continues to maximise occupancy and support more children and young people within Council-owned provision.
- The number of children placed in foster care (i.e. RMBC's own carers, with families & friends and independent fostering agencies) currently stands at 313 and remains unchanged to the July reported numbers.
- The mix of placement types, limited placement options, increasing unit costs and the growing complexity of children's care needs continue to present significant challenges. Despite these pressures, work is underway to ensure that non-complex external residential placements are regularly reviewed and that progress against the wider step-down plan is closely monitored to identify opportunities to reduce costs while ensuring that children's needs continue to be met.

2.9.4 A forecast underspend of £2.3m is projected across Family Help, Education & Inclusion, and other Directorate-wide services. This mainly reflects the impact of budget recovery actions to mitigate placement cost pressures, including the re-direction and slippage of grant funding, where permitted under grant conditions, together with vacancy and staff turnover savings.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets (£8.1m forecast deficit)

2.9.5 A net surplus balance of £1.5m is forecast for all maintained schools in Rotherham for 2026/27 based on submitted budget plans in July 2026. There are currently no schools reporting a forecast budget deficit for the year.

2.9.6 The Council is forecasting an in-year Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit of £8.1m, comprising £7.7m within the High Needs Block and £0.4m within the Early Years Block. This is £1.7m worse than the position reported in July and reflects ongoing pressures across the SEND system. Demand for special school and Independent Specialist Provider (ISP) placements for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) is higher than expected. Demand for Tier 3 SEND Inclusion Support in early years settings is also above forecast.

2.9.7 The Government has replaced the former Safety Valve programme with the High Needs Stability Grant (HNSG), which will fund 90% of DSG deficits accrued up to 31 March 2026. Following approval of Rotherham's Local SEND Reform Plan, the Council's 2025/26 HNSG allocation of £0.4m has been confirmed; this relates to the deficit as at the end of 2025/26 and is not for the current deficit's 90% as the Department for Education (DfE) has factored into the grant calculation the £20.5m of Safety Valve grant the Council has already received. In respect of 2025/26, the

Council will be left with a deficit of £2.3m. The Council will only have to fund this deficit position at the end of the Statutory Override which ends March 2028. Taking account of the latest forecast deficit and HNSG funding, the DSG Reserve is forecast to have a cumulative deficit of £10.4m by 31 March 2027.

2.9.8 The Council's cumulative DSG deficit is forecast to reach £20.4m by March 2028, when the current statutory protection ends, and could increase by around £10m per year thereafter if demand and cost pressures continue. While no decision has yet been made, it is expected that the Department for Education may continue to provide the High Needs Stability Grant, which is expected to fund 90% of eligible deficits in the years 2026/27 and 2027/28. If this level of support continues, the Council's remaining liability at March 2028 would be around £4m. As the position depends on future Government decisions and the impact of SEND reforms, it will continue to be closely monitored and reflected in the Council's budget planning and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

2.10 **Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (£1.9m forecast overspend)**

2.10.1 The Directorate is forecast to overspend by £1.9m, an improvement of £0.3m since the previous period. Demand and high complexity of care packages within Adult Social Care make up the projected overspend. The cost of care packages is forecast to overspend by £1.9m within Adult Care. There is also an overspend of £0.5m for staffing costs as agency spend and overtime spend is higher than the budget to cover gaps in service for in-house care provision and other staffing pressures. Work continues to identify options to address the increased use of agency staff and difficulties experienced in recruitment.

2.10.2 The area of biggest overspend is working age adults with Learning Disabilities. The overspend in Learning Disabilities is largely made up of a small number of individuals with high-cost needs, including in Out of Borough placements that cater for individuals with the most complex needs and high-cost residential care. Work is underway to understand the drivers behind these costs given the Council spends more per working age adult than the national average. The work will assess where there are opportunities to ensure the most cost efficient process is in place, to support the delivery of services within budget and the delivery of the saving of £0.9m approved as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27.

2.10.3 Public Health is expected to underspend by £0.1m as a result of staffing vacancies.

2.10.4 Housing is forecast to underspend by £0.4m on non-Housing Revenue Account activity. The main drivers behind this are fewer people sleeping rough in need of support and additional grant provision.

2.11 **Regeneration and Environment Directorate (£2.4m forecast overspend)**

2.11.1 The Directorate is forecasting a £2.4m overspend, which is an improvement of £0.8m from the last report to Cabinet. The key variances and movements are detailed below.

2.11.2 The Waste Management service is forecasting to be £1.5m overspent, which is in line with the last report. This is largely caused by overspends on transport, as the service continues to operate with a high number of hire and spare vehicles. It is hoped this position will improve once new refuse collection vehicles arrive next financial year. Work is continuing to achieve the route optimisation saving approved as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2025/26 however, difficulties in collection experienced during Autumn 2025/26 have meant that the planned removal of two routes has not yet been possible, though is still intended.

2.11.3 Home to School Transport is forecasting a £1.1m overspend, which is in line with the last report. This position assumes that all children using the service at the end of the academic year will continue to do so from September 2026, so further changes are possible once the implications from the 2026/27 cohort are worked through; the impacts of new routes will be fully understood as efficiencies are identified, allowing a revised financial position to be determined in due course.

2.11.4 The Markets service is forecasting a £0.7m overspend because of income shortfalls which is a similar position to previous years but a worsening of £0.1m since the last report as rent-free periods have been extended. This position will be monitored carefully as the development works continue, following the successful move of traders from the indoor covered market into the new Market Hall.

2.11.5 The position across the Directorate has improved by £0.8m following a review of the balance sheet, grants and in-year income generation. These are mostly temporary savings and unlikely to carry forward into 2027/28.

2.12 **Corporate Services (balanced forecast)**

2.12.1 The Directorate is currently forecasting an overall balanced outturn. Whilst there are pressures across individual services as explained below, it is expected that robust budget management across the whole Directorate will be able to address these pressures in year.

2.12.2 Property and Facilities Services (PFS) is forecast to be overspent by £1.0m, which is in line with the last report. This is broadly because Facilities Management is forecast to overspend by £1.4m due to assorted building costs, largely repairs and maintenance, offset in part by additional income generation within cleaning services.

2.12.3 Within the wider Directorate, budget pressures are primarily attributable to a managed over-recruitment within the Customer Services Contact Centre and the continued reliance on locums and external suppliers within Legal Services to address ongoing recruitment challenges. These measures have been implemented deliberately to maintain service continuity and performance in key areas.

2.12.4 Regarding Legal Services a substantial amount of the additional demand for solicitors arises from Children's and Adult Social Care activity and demand. Further pressures are also anticipated following a Supreme Court ruling that has significantly changed the approach to Deprivation of Liberty applications, alongside legal costs associated with ongoing litigation against the Council. In

addition, the Council's engagement in support of the National Grooming Gang Inquiry brings additional legal costs. Meanwhile, recruitment to permanent legal posts remains challenging despite ongoing campaigns, reflecting a wider local government workforce issue. As a result, the service continues to rely on locums and external providers, including King's Counsel where necessary, to maintain capacity and meet statutory and operational requirements. Although some costs are offset by savings from vacant posts, the September forecast outturn remains an overspend of £0.5m, including £0.1m relating to Children's Social Care and £0.3m relating to Adult Social Care. Further savings and mitigating actions will be

2.12.5 required to achieve a balanced financial position.

There are underspends within the Directorate that are helping to mitigate these pressures. Reduced costs on some ICT contracts that have renewed, capitalisation where possible and a number of vacant posts that have been challenging to fill are helping to mitigate the pressures, amounting to £1.2m in total. However, further savings and mitigating actions will be required to achieve a balanced financial position.

2.13 **Policy, Strategy and Engagement (£0.1m underspend)**

2.13.1 The service is currently forecasting a small underspend. Overspends due to the cost of the interim Director of PSE at the start of the year are being offset by salary recharges to grant schemes along with part year vacancies.

2.14 **Central Services (£5.0m underspend)**

2.14.1 Central Services has a £5.0m forecast underspend, primarily reflecting savings from Treasury Management activity.

2.14.2 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is to minimise the level of borrowing and to borrow short term to ultimately minimise interest costs. This, along with slippage from the Capital Programme in 2025/26, means that the level of financing costs for 2026/27 are less than anticipated. This is because the Council builds in the financial impact of all capital investment decisions into the revenue budget, at the point those decisions are made. This is an approach that will see the Council generate savings to support Council wide pressures.

2.14.3 There continue to be financial challenges as a result of increased market costs, however it is envisaged that the Council is well positioned to address these pressures in year due to actions taken as part of the budget setting process for 2026/27. Ongoing uncertainty in the global and UK economy remains an ongoing budget risk.

2.14.4 The Central Services budgets are made up of a number of corporate budgets for levies and charges such as the Transport Levy, Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Financing, and Treasury Management. A list of the main budget areas within Central Services was provided as part of the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27, approved at Council on 4th March 2026. The costs within this area are largely fixed costs, set out prior to the start of a financial year, not specific to a particular Directorate and are therefore not controllable by the Directorates and thus held centrally.

2.15 **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (£0.3m underspend)**

2.15.1 The Housing Revenue Account is a statutory ring-fenced account that the Council has to maintain in respect of the income and expenditure incurred in relation to its council dwellings and associated assets. The HRA is currently forecast to underspend by £0.3m as the requests for repairs so far in the year have been lower than budgeted for.

2.16 **Capital Programme Update**

2.16.1 The revised Capital Programme is £214.931m split between the General Fund £125.434m and HRA £89.497m. The total change to the programme in 2026/27 is an increase of £8.448m from the previously reported budget of £206.483m to Cabinet on 14th September 2026. The movement is based on revised profiles of expenditure against schemes, including slippage / re-profiles, corrections and new grant funding added to the programme.

2.16.2 **Table 4: Variations to the Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2029/30**

	Total Impact	**2026/27 Impact**	**Post 2026/27 Impact**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**
Corporate Resources – General Fund	0.100	-0.050	0.150
Corporate Resources – HRA	0.000	0.000	0.000
Revised Grant and Funding Estimates	9.058	3.905	5.153
Slippage / Reprofiling	0.000	4.590	-4.590
Budget corrections	0.212	0.003	0.209
Total	**9.370**	**8.448**	**0.922**

2.16.3 The main items contributing to the reprofiling of the Capital Programme are:

- **Tenter Street, Thornhill**, £0.812m slippage. This scheme has been reviewed at outline business case stage and the spend profile amended to align with a revised programme delivery.

- **Warm Homes Phase 1**, £1.133m slippage. The Council has reviewed the programme of works with the contractor and this has now been amended to take into account inclement weather over the winter period which will impact on work that can be delivered as well as reflecting average costs being lower than budgeted. Overall, the programme is still delivering ahead of the original plan.

- **ICT Data Back up and Storage**, £0.100m slippage. The Council had completed a procurement process; however, the first placed supplier withdrew from the tender exercise which has delayed delivery of works and means less expenditure this financial year than was originally planned.

- **Bushfield Road Site B, Wath-Upon-Dearne**, £0.517m slippage. The Council is currently navigating some delays on site due to unknown ground conditions; the budget has been slipped into 27-28 as a result of these delays.

- **Former Miners Welfare, Maltby**, £2.528m acceleration. This is a new addition to the programme to buy 15 properties and bring into the housing stock this financial year.

- **St James Close, Wath**, £1.130m acceleration. This is a new addition to the programme to buy 6 properties and bring into the housing stock this financial year.

- **Brampton Vale Phase 2, Wath-Upon-Dearne,** £0.261m slippage. The developer has confirmed a slightly revised delivery profile. 7 units have been completed so far with 2 more units to be completed this financial year. The remaining units are now due in 2027/28 and 2028/29.

- **Cranworth Centre underpinning**, £0.097m slippage. We had been expecting to carry out remedial works in 2026/27 but it has been recommended that we carry out a period of monitoring for 12 months to monitor the building so that an appropriate scope of works can be developed. Therefore, work will now take place in 2027/28 once the monitoring and scoping has been completed.

- **Catcliffe Treeton Flood Alleviation Scheme**, £0.500m slippage. Design work is now expected to take around one year to complete before construction work can commence. It is anticipated that there is a need for some road closures during the construction works, with diversion routes implemented throughout this period. The Council is currently undertaking highway modelling work to better understand the wider impacts this closure may have on the surrounding road network so the slippage of budget into 2027/28 better reflects programme delivery.

- **Business Centre upgrade work (firestopping, toilet upgrades and gate),** £0.304m slippage. These works have been delayed as the roofing works will need to be completed first. Roofing works commenced in October 2026 and will last for 6 months.

- **Larch Road, Maltby**, £0.243m acceleration. The programme is now expecting some earlier completed properties than expected and budget is brought forward from 2027/28 to cover this cost this year.

- **Building Decarbonisation**, £0.096m acceleration. The budget for 2026/27 has been adjusted accordingly to reflect expected in year spend following

an updated spend estimation from the contractor for the Riverside House canopy works.

- **Riverside Gardens**, £1.264m acceleration. Work is continuing to be delivered at pace and sooner than expected following the completion of the commissioning process. Budget has been brought forward to cover this.

- **Rotherham Markets**, £0.617m acceleration. Work is continuing to be delivered at pace and sooner than expected following the completion of the commissioning process, and budget has been brought forward to cover this.

- **Bassingthorpe Farm**, £.0.090m acceleration. Work is progressing on bringing the land forward for residential development and there are higher costs in 2026/27 for legal and commercial consultancy than originally planned.

- **Denman Road, Wath**, £2.987m acceleration. The budget for this scheme was incorrectly loaded and has now been corrected.

- **Corporate Resources General Fund,** £0.100m net adjustment. A budget to complete work for the Sisters Gate project has now been added into the programme £150k and the remaining balance of funding for the Property floor resilience scheme £50k has been removed from the programme.

- **Budget corrections,** £0.211m adjustment. The budgets for schemes at Bushfield Road and Valley Drive were incorrect and have now been adjusted to show the correct budgets for 2026/27.

2.16.4 New grant funded schemes are added to the Capital Programme on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules. Grant schemes added or reduced since the September Cabinet report are listed below:

Table 5: New Grant/HRA funded Schemes added to the programme

Directorate/Scheme	**2026/27** **£m**
Children and Young People	
Department for Education – Strategic School Improvement Capital Budget (SSICB) - Newman Whiston	3.219
Regeneration and Environment	
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) - UK Shared Prosperity Fund	0.557
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) - Pedestrian Movement	0.200
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) - Transforming Cities	0.070

CRSTS (City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme) - Green Arbour Rd Laughton Common Road	-0.013
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) - Active Travel Fund	-0.208
Section 106 - Dalton & Thrybergh Pump Track	0.080
Total	**3.905**

2.17 **Capital Programme Variations Requiring Cabinet Approval**

2.17.1 The following variations to the Capital Programme cover significant virements between capital projects that are either a key decision value or a change in use of corporate resources and as such need reporting to Cabinet.

2.17.2 **Bassingthorpe Farm Development**

As part of the 2019/20 budget a provision was included in the capital programme to cover a value of up to £910,000 for the purchase of land off Fenton Road to be used for a housing development.

The development of the Fenton Road land plot together with the Bassingthorpe Farm strategic site aims to make a significant contribution to the Council's housing delivery target of 1,111 new homes per year.

The purchase of the freehold of the land plot (title nr. SYK41499) was formally concluded in March 2023. The budget allocated for the purchase of the Fenton Road site for a residential development had not been spent in full with the overall spend totalling at £420,183.50.

It is proposed to reassign the remaining budget of £489,816.50 to be used on the delivery of the development of the Bassingthorpe site. These funds will be spent alongside an already existing capital allocation to progress the scheme through the negotiations with the majority landowner to the procurement for a developer partner, and, subsequently to the delivery on site.

	Bassingthorpe Farm Land Acquisition Scheme	Bassingthorpe Farm Scheme
Original Budget	910,000.00	673,072.00
Spend to Date	420,183.50	186,440.00
Remaining Budget	489,816.50	486,632.00
Virement Proposed	-489,816.50	489,816.50
Updated Remaining Budget	0.00	976,448.50

2.18 **MCA Approvals**

2.18.1 The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) acts as accountable body for a number of different Government funding streams and as the accountable body for Gainshare.

2.18.2 SYMCA is proposing to bring forward a limited proportion of the future Transport for City Regions (TCR) Highway Capital Maintenance allocation into 2026/27.

2.18.3 For Rotherham, the current proposal is an early drawdown of £3.052m in 2026/27 from its overall TCR Highway Capital Maintenance allocation of £34.629m. This does not increase or reduce Rotherham's total TCR allocation, it simply changes the timing of when part of the funding becomes available. Rotherham's overall allocation is based on its 30.52% share of the relevant South Yorkshire road network. The grant received in advance will be applied to the existing capital programme highway capital maintenance projects, allowing other funding streams such as corporate borrowing to be carried forward.

2.18.4 The remaining TCR allocation would then be reprofiled across 2027/28–2031/32. Indicatively, this is around £5.9m per year during 2027/28–2029/30 and £6.9m per year during 2030/31–2031/32. The difference between the first three year and final two years of TCR funding is the early draw down value (£3.052m).

2.18.5 Cabinet are asked to note early payment of £3.052m grant from the Transport for City Regions (TCR) fund that will be considered by SYMCA's Board on 27th October 2026.

2.19 **Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2029/30**

2.19.1 The proposed updated Capital Programme to 2029/30 is shown by Directorate below.

Table 6: Updated Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2029/30

Directorate	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**Total**
	Budget	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**	**Budget**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**
General Fund Capital					
Adult Care & Housing	7.807	7.760	6.927	1.760	24.254
Children and Young People	14.645	15.033	15.210	7.020	51.908
Corporate Services	15.343	16.592	17.103	7.157	56.195
Policy, Strategy and Engagement	0.670	0.210	0.210	0.210	1.300
Regeneration & Environment	86.969	60.056	10.218	2.582	159.825

Total General Fund Capital	**125.434**	**99.651**	**49.668**	**18.729**	**293.482**
Total HRA Capital	**89.497**	**67.957**	**59.911**	**100.411**	**317.776**
Total RMBC Capital Programme	**214.931**	**167.608**	**109.579**	**119.140**	**611.258**

2.19.2 The Capital Programme for 2026/27 remains ambitious even with a significant level of re-profiling of schemes into 2027/28. The Council will therefore need to keep close control of project spend profiles and delivery milestones to keep these projects on track. The Council will also need to review the deliverability of this increased Capital Programme and potentially, re-profile some schemes into future financial years.

2.20 **Funding Position of Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2029/30**

2.20.1 **Table 7: Funding of the approved Capital Programme**

Funding Stream	**2026/27 Budget**	**2027/28 Budget**	**2028/29 Budget**	**2029/30 Budget**	**Total Budget**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**
Capital Receipts	0.415	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.415
Grants and Contributions	69.208	42.301	14.788	3.400	129.697
Revenue Contribution	0.140	0.143	0.146	0.000	0.429
Unsupported Borrowing	55.671	57.206	34.734	15.329	162.940
Total Funding - General Fund	**125.434**	**99.651**	**49.668**	**18.729**	**293.482**
Capital Receipts	13.859	4.464	1.327	11.774	31.424
Grants and Contributions	12.421	8.541	0.000	15.246	36.208
Housing Major Repairs Allowance	37.101	30.038	28.768	28.555	124.462
Revenue Contribution	14.149	7.812	7.000	12.318	41.279
Unsupported Borrowing	11.967	17.102	22.816	32.518	84.403
Total Funding - HRA	**89.497**	**67.957**	**59.911**	**100.411**	**317.776**
Total	**214.931**	**167.608**	**109.579**	**119.140**	**611.258**

2.21 **Capital Receipts**

2.21.1 To date General Fund useable capital receipts of £4.648m have been generated. Although loan repayments will be received during the financial year, these cannot

be used to support the revenue budget as only those receipts by the disposal of property, plant and equipment can be used in that way.

Description	**Total as at 30th September 2026**
	£m
Miscellaneous	-0.016
Land at Worrygoose Lane	-4.481
Land at Ellis Street	-0.139
Total Capital Receipts (Excluding loan repayments)	**-4.636**
Repayment of Loans	-0.012
Total Capital Receipts	**-4.648**

2.22 **Capital Achievements**

2.22.1 The following outputs have been achieved during the period July – September 2026:

Corporate Services

Property and Facilities Services

- Oaklea Retreat - structural repairs to roof, accessibility (DDA compliance), energy efficiency measures
- The Meeting Place - painting / decorating, signage upgrades and energy efficiency measures
- Clifton Learning Partnership - condition works
- Kimberworth the Place - new roof
- Wellgate North Car Park - retaining wall rebuilt
- Badsley Moor Lane Primary - heating replacement
- Badsley Moor Lane Primary - flat roof works
- Rawmarsh Thorogate Primary - upgrade the fire alarm
- Todwick Primary - upgrade the fire alarm
- Wales Primary - nursery modular building roof
- Eastwood Village Primary - deck waterproofing works

Information Communication and Technology (ICT)

- Replacement of the Council's Compute platform that ensures that the Council can hold and store data from multiple Council systems and provides increased business continuity and resilience capability.

Regeneration and Environment

Planning, Regeneration and Transport

- Completed the demolition of Wath library which marks a significant step forward for the £9.9m scheme, which will deliver a modern library, improved public spaces and new opportunities for residents and businesses.
- The contracting strategy for the design and delivery of Rotherham Gateway rail infrastructure has been agreed, with Network Rail undertaking the rail and tram train elements.
- Carriageway works have been completed at Moorgate, adding to the improved roads across the borough.
- The repair works to the river wall at the Riverside Residential Quarter were also completed in August 2026, further future-proofing the area for future residents. The lighting columns have also been installed, pending opening of the footpath.

Culture, Sport and Tourism

- Works have commenced to renew the track at Herringthorpe Athletics Stadium. This is part of a wider programme of works to renew community parks and facilities, which has previously completed works at Herringthorpe Valley Park Tennis Courts. The resurfacing project will provide a modern, high-quality track that meets current performance and safety standards, benefiting local athletics clubs, schools, community groups and individual users. The investment will help ensure the stadium remains a valued venue for training, competition and participation opportunities for people of all ages, supporting wider ambitions to increase physical activity levels and improve health and wellbeing across the borough.

Community Safety & Street scene

- Ocular has been awarded a contract for additional works required to upgrade and enhance CCTV in the borough. This will support the council's work in migrating Public Realm CCTV from legacy BT analogue lines to fibre and wireless infrastructure.
- The Whiston Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme continues to progress well, with Esh Construction as the Contractor. The scheme remains on programme, with construction anticipated to be completed during the first half of 2027.
- Catcliffe and Treeton Flood Alleviation Scheme: Esh Construction has been appointed as the Design and Build Contractor. Current programme estimates suggest that the design phase could take approximately one year, primarily due to the need for third-party approvals, after which construction works would commence. The Council is currently undertaking highway modelling work to better understand the wider impacts associated closures may have on the surrounding road network, including potential

impacts at locations such as the Treeton Lane and Pleasley Road junction in Aughton.

- The Eel Mires Dike Flood Alleviation Scheme has achieved “Shovel Ready” status and the initial stages of the "Delivery" phase has begun with engagement with landowners to begin discussions regarding the land acquisitions necessary for delivery of the scheme. The Council is continuing to seek additional funding opportunities, including potential contributions from the Environment Agency and other external funding sources. At this stage, the construction start date remains unconfirmed and will depend upon securing the required funding package.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Strategic Housing Growth and Development Programme

- In September 2026 the Council entered the Stage 2 construction phase contract for the Tenter Street Council new-build scheme with RH Fullwood Ltd. This scheme will deliver 20 much needed new homes.
- In the same month the Council secured approval from Homes England for £2.57m in Social and Affordable Housing Grant funding for the Tenter Street scheme. This grant is crucial to the deliverability of the scheme.
- In August 2026 the Council secured a property through the Market Acquisitions workstream, meaning the Housing Delivery Programme has now delivered new housing in every ward in the borough.

Improvements and investment in Council Housing stock

The following outputs have been achieved during the 2026/27 financial year to 31st August	**Delivery in current period (July & August)**
Structural Repairs	38
Major Voids (voids with a replacement element such as kitchen, bathroom, heating system etc, or exceeding c. £5,000 in repair value)	75
The Lanes re-roofing scheme	0
East Herringthorpe re-roofing scheme	71
Brampton re-roofing scheme	0
Henley & Holmes re-roofing scheme	0
West Melton re-roofing scheme	67
Kimberworth Park re-roofing scheme	0
Internal Refurbishments (Kitchens or bathroom replacements) (not including replacements in Voids)	27
Ventilation Works (upgrade of existing, or installation of new mechanical extraction) (not including works in Voids)	507
Damp and Mould Preventative Works	0
Ad-Hoc Capital Investment (capital investment works that were unplanned for 26/27)	14

Thermal Improvements (solar panels, cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and/or ventilation)	109
Garage Investment	0
Boiler Replacements (not including replacements in Voids)	380
District Heating Investment	3
Capital Electrical Works (rewires, consumer unit changes etc) (not including works in Voids)	64
Window or Door Replacements (per property)	38
Fire Door Replacements	6
Fitzwilliam Estate (Swinton) replacement Windows & Doors scheme	0
Canklow replacement Windows & Doors scheme	25
Asbestos removals	0
Environmental schemes	0
Wharncliffe electrical upgrade works	0
Loft insulation increases in Void properties	45
Kitchens in Void properties	95
Bathrooms in Void properties	25
Electrical rewires in Void properties	24
Heating system/boiler replacements in Void properties	10

2.23 **Updated 2026/27 Capital Budget vs Original Budget**

2.23.1 In order to enable effective monitoring and scrutiny of the movement in the capital budget during the year the below table shows the current 2026/27 capital budget against the original capital budget reported to Cabinet in July 2026.

Directorate	**Original Budget £m**	**Updated Budget £m**
General Fund Capital		
Adult Care & Housing	7.449	7.807
Children and Young People	12.132	14.645
Corporate Services	15.089	15.343
Policy, Strategy and Engagement	0.630	0.670
Regeneration & Environment	74.427	86.969
Total General Fund Capital	**109.727**	**125.433**
Total HRA Capital	70.955	89.497
Total RMBC Capital Programme	**180.682**	**214.930**

2.24 **City Region Sustainability Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Revenue Fund**

2.24.1 In July 2025, Cabinet noted the position on the CRSTS grant and delegated the decision to allocate and spend the remaining grant to the (then) Assistant Director Planning Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member.

2.24.2 Subsequently, the Council has been allocated a further tranche of this funding and delegation is sought for this and all future allocations as set out in Recommendation four. For this tranche the Council has been awarded £1,591,196 to spend by 31st March 2028. The funding is intended to ensure sufficient resource capacity is available to progress future transport schemes and business cases. It is intended to spend the grant on the following:

- Road safety measures
- Staff training and resilience
- Structures inspections, risk database
- Digitisation of Traffic Regulation Orders
- IT Software
- Feasibility and development
- Evidence base for future bids
- Local Plan Update

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 With regard to the current forecast net revenue budget overspend of £2.9m that the Council is forecasting, further management actions continue to be identified with the clear aim of ensuring a balanced budget position can be achieved.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The Council consulted on the proposed budget for 2026/27, as part of producing the Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27. Details of the consultation are set out in the Budget and Council Tax 2026/27 report approved by Council on 4th March 2026.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Executive Directors, Managers and Budget Holders will ensure ongoing tight management and close scrutiny of spend this financial year.

5.2 Financial Monitoring reports are taken to Cabinet meetings during the year. The Financial Outturn report for 2026/27 will be taken to Cabinet in July 2027.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The Council's overspend position is detailed within the report along with the estimated impact of current financial pressures from inflation and increases in demand. This position continues to be monitored closely. Control over spending remains critical to both maintaining the robust Reserves Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. Project specific implications have been addressed in the Key Issues section.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 This report forms part of the Council's governance and financial management framework and supports Cabinet in the monitoring of the approved revenue budget and capital programme. In this context, the Council is required to make proper arrangements for the administration of its financial affairs pursuant to the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and associated legislation.

7.2 Subject to the paragraph above, there are no direct legal implications arising from the Recommendations within this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Whilst there are no direct human resources implications arising from this monitoring report, there are ongoing workforce related pressures reflected in the financial position. These include recruitment and retention challenges in key services and use of agency and locum staffing. These factors will continue to be monitored as part of workforce planning.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The report includes reference to the cost pressures on both Children's and Adults' Social care budgets.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 This is a finance update report, providing a review of current progress to date on the Council's revenue and capital budgets; any equalities and human rights impacts from service delivery have been or will be detailed as service budgets and capital projects are pulled together for inclusion within the Council's revenue budget or capital programme. The Equality Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 As this report is a financial update on previous events, updates on levels of funding moving forwards and doesn't approve anything directly to happen, it does not have any carbon implications. The Carbon Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 At a time of economic difficulty and tight financial constraints, managing spend in line with the Council's budget is paramount. Careful scrutiny of expenditure and income across all services and close budget monitoring therefore remain a top priority if the Council is to deliver both its annual and medium-term financial plans while sustaining its overall financial resilience.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 To any extent that the approved budget, budget savings or compensating mitigations are not achieved, this will require a drawdown on Reserves. The Council's approved Reserves strategy shows that there is a sufficient balance of Reserves to mitigate overall budget risk, however, a continued call on the Reserves over and above that planned over the medium term would be financially unstainable.

13.2 The Capital Programme is funded through a number of sources: prudential borrowing, capital grants and contributions, revenue contributions and capital receipts. The Council will need to closely consider the level of prudential borrowing it incurs moving forwards post the 2026/27 Budget to ensure that the Council's overall debt position is manageable, can be financed within the Council's Treasury Management Budgets and to help guard against interest rate risk. There is also potential risk that the future years' funding from Government Grants and external sources may vary from that estimated.

13.3 Financial Services work closely with Senior Officers and Project Managers to monitor project expenditure and performance through the Capital Programme Monitoring and Delivery Board (CPM&DB). Improvements, like this, introduced to the Capital Programme governance arrangements and enhanced reporting requirements help to ensure that Members will receive early notice of any specific project issues. This will enable early intervention to take place to bring projects back on timetable and cost, or if necessary, agree an additional capital programme funding approval. Where elements of the Programme are reliant on future grant funding, future projects will be continually reviewed to match the programme against funding availability.

14. Accountable Officers

Rob Mahon, Service Director – Financial Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/10/2026
Service Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	20/10/2026

Report Author: Rob Mahon, Service Director – Financial Services
This report is published on the Council's website.

Appendix 1

Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A)

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

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

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an equality analysis.

1. Title	
Title: September 2026/27 Financial Monitoring Report	
Directorate: Corporate Services	**Service area:** Financial
Lead person: Rob Mahon	**Contact:** 01709 254518
Is this a: ☐ **Strategy / Policy** ☑ **Service / Function** ☐ **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Council has a framework of budgetary monitoring and reporting that ensures budget management is exercised within annual cash limits. Each month the Budget Manager receives timely information on income and expenditure to enable them to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities. Following the review of the budget information, each budget manager provides a forecast of their projected outturn position on each service. The Executive Director subsequently provides a consolidated forecast for their directorate to the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Cabinet Member.

A budget monitoring report, which includes an up-to-date outturn forecast, information about significant variances from approved budgets and proposals for dealing with them, is submitted to Cabinet at least 6 times a year, culminating with the Councils Financial Outturn report.

Whilst the framework described above relates to revenue budgets, the capital programme is also similarly monitored and reported alongside the Council's revenue position.

The financial monitoring position report summarises the key variances for each directorate and considers the key financial pressures and risks.

This report is the third financial report in the financial year; it sets out the Councils latest revenue forecast position. The report also covers off any other key items to be noted at this time.

Given that the revenue and capital budgets have been approved by Council in February each year, when equality assessments would have been considered at that time in respect of the budget proposals, there are no further issues in respect of equality and diversity.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

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

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

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?		X
Could the proposal affect service users?		X
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?		X
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		X
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		X

Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		X

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason.
Given that the revenue and capital budgets have been approved by Council in February each year, when equality assessments would have been considered at that time in respect of the budget proposals, there are no further issues in respect of equality and diversity.

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

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

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity
If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals prior to carrying out an **Equality Analysis.** Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation. Please provide specific details for all three areas below and use the prompts for guidance.
• **How have you considered equality and diversity?** N/A
• **Key findings** N/A
• **Actions** N/A

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	n/a
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	n/a
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	n/a

5. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Rob Mahon	Service Director Financial Services	19/10/2026

6. Publishing	
This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	19/10/2026
Report title and date	2026/27 Financial Monitoring Report to Cabinet 15th November 2026
If relates to a Key Delegated Decision, **Executive Board**, **Council** or a **Significant Operational Decision** – **report date and date sent for publication**	
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	19/10/2026

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified:			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across the Borough as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from transport?	None				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				

Identify any emissions impacts associated with this decision which have not been covered by the above fields
This report constitutes an update on previously approved activity.

Will the proposal affect Council services' resilience to climate change, or the capacity of people living in the Borough to adapt to climate change?
There are no specific impacts on resilience identified as part of this assessment. Significant new actions will be or have been subject to their own climate impact assessments.

Provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:
As this report is a financial update on previous events, updates on levels of funding moving forwards and doesn't approve anything directly to happen, it does not have any carbon implications.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Nikki Kelly Finance Manager (Corporate Finance) Financial Services Finance and Customer Services
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	*N/A*
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	*N/A*
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA 709 Katie Rockett Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

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

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report
Judith Badger, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Report Author(s)
Rob Mahon, Service Director of Financial Services
01709 254518 or Rob.Mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report sets out an update of the Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2029/30, including the standard technical updates required, recognition of financial pressures impacting the delivery of services and the ongoing impact on the Council's base costs of inflation.

The technical adjustments also include the Council's assessment of the Government's Fair Funding Review 2.0 (FFR). During 2025 Government consulted upon and delivered the Fair Funding Review 2.0. This created a significant shift in how Local Government is funded and how the resources for Local Government are distributed. The focus of funding distribution moved more towards areas of greatest deprivation and need. The impact for RMBC of the Fair Funding Review, as confirmed with the Final Financial Settlement 2026, was a positive one, with an additional £22.6m of funding per year provided to the Council by 2028/29. Though this was a significant shift in direction that the Council welcomed, the funding was necessary to address the demand and market pressures the Council had been seeing in recent years.

The impact of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 was factored into the Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27 and MTFS update through to 2028/29. Given this provided Councils with funding certainty over a longer period, covering 2026/27 to 2028/29, it is not expected that this funding position will change significantly moving into 2027/28. Government will have provided a Budget announcement on 28th October 2026 that it was not possible to consider at the time of writing this report, followed by an Autumn

Policy Update in November 2026. As such these announcements will be closely considered and any changes announced factored into the Council's Budget and MTFS planning.

The MTFS will be revised further in advance of the Council Budget setting meeting in March 2027, to take account of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2027/28, when issued, along with budget policy proposals on level of Council Tax, reserves, fees and charges and any budget savings or investments.

The MTFS position may change as the Council gains greater clarity on the impact of current demand and market pressures and the impact of management actions taken to ensure that the 2026/27 financial outturn is balanced by year end. Financial monitoring through to Cabinet for the remainder of the financial year will help to manage and control this position and ensure the MTFS is as robust as possible. The Government's Budget and Autumn Policy update will help, but these announcements will not provide a definitive outcome for the Council. The Provisional Financial Settlement set to be released in mid to late December 2026 is where the Council gains a clear position on any changes to the Council's funding position.

The Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27 reported that there was a balanced budget for 2026/27 through to 2028/29. It should be noted that 2028/29 was balanced through use of £9.3m of the £10.0m Recovery Grant Uplift provided as part of the Final Financial Settlement. The remaining £0.7m was used to fund additional investment into the Council's Roads Programme 2026/27. As such it was anticipated that the Budget gap for 2029/30 would be at least £10m; however, following the technical review of the MTFS across this longer term period this was revised to £11.5m.

This base position and the financial pressures faced during 2026/27, such as social care pressures, challenges in Waste Management and Home to School Transport present a challenge for the Council in the MTFS period. However, the benefits of the FFR 2.0, the outcome of the national Business Rates Reset and the continued positive delivery against savings plans offer the Council an opportunity to address these financial challenges and consider potential investments. After taking account of these pressures and opportunities, the Council is able to project a broadly positive MTFS position in the short term that would allow the Council to consider potential investment proposals. However, there will need to be consideration given to the projected gap projected for 2029/30.

Financial Year	**2026/27 £'000**	**2027/28 £'000**	**2028/29 £'000**	**2029/30 £'000**
Opening Position – as at Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27	0	0	0	11,525
Revised Estimated Budget Gap	2,900	-3,711	-2,296	6,072

The current MTFS forecasts present surpluses ahead of a large budget gap in 2029/30. Whilst the Council may wish to utilise its positive short term position to consider investments, it will also need to plan for the 2029/30 challenge. As this

pressure is far enough into the future, it will not necessarily require to be resolved as part of setting the 2027/28 Budget. It is important to note that this position is before budget policy proposals on levels of Council Tax, reserves, fees and charges and any budget savings or investments.

Recommendations

That Cabinet note the MTFS 2026/27 to 2029/30 update.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Budget and Council Tax 2026/267 and Medium Term Financial Strategy, Council March 2026.
Financial Outturn 2025/26, Cabinet July 2026.
July Financial Monitoring Report, Cabinet September 2026.
September Financial Monitoring Report, Cabinet November 2026.

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

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Medium Term Financial Strategy

1. Background

1.1 The Council's balanced Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 through to 2028/29 was approved at Council in March 2025. Since approval of the MTFS there have been continuing financial challenges as a result of: demand, complexity of care need and market pressures impacting social care services; income pressures within Regeneration and Environment along with operational pressures in Waste Management and Home to School Transport; and the impact of the Local Government Pay Award 2026/27. Inflation remains a challenge, fluctuating through the year from 3% in January, dropping to 2.6% in June then rising back up and reaching a September 2025 Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 3.5%; this increases the Council's base costs which then presents a longer term challenge for the Council.

1.2 The Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award for 2026/27 was agreed in August 2026 as a 3.3% increase on all the salary values and associated allowances for all grades. The impact of this pay offer is estimated to be £1.6m above the position built into the Council's Budget for 2026/27 and will be funded during 2026/27 through temporary savings from Treasury Management factored into Central Services and inflationary provision built into the Budget that has not been required for other purposes. The ongoing impact has been factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as a pressure.

1.3 This update of the MTFS includes resource forecasts based on estimated increases to core funding streams that are inflated annually by CPI (September CPI, 3.5%). These resource assumptions will be reviewed again when the Government's Budget is released on 28th October and when the Provisional Finance Settlement 2027/28 is released in December 2026. The Government's Budget is not expected to reveal significant changes following the outcome of the FFR 2.0. The Provisional Finance Settlement will then further confirm the Council's funding position, setting out the specific amounts of Government funding to be provided to the Council. At this point any changes from the FFR 2.0 position will be confirmed.

1.4 This update of the MTFS also includes the Council's latest financial assumptions, taking into account estimated income from Business Rates and Council Tax, impact of inflation on service cost and demand pressures and the Council's timeline for the delivery of agreed savings across the MTFS. This update will support and inform the detailed budget setting process for 2027/28, alongside taking into account the outcomes of the Finance Settlement and the Council's policy choices and decisions on Council Tax levels. The Council's assumptions on Business Rates collection for 2026/27 had been impacted by the winding-up order made against Speciality Steel, the Council's single biggest rate payer at £2.8m a year. However, this position has improved during the last 12 months with the Government's intervention and the intended acquisition, that will ensure the rates liability is paid during the period of Government occupation of the site.

1.5 The MTFS review sits alongside the September Financial Monitoring 2026/27 report to Cabinet in November 2026, that projects a financial overspend of £2.9m. The Council expects to balance this projected outturn position before the year end; however, there is a risk that the use of the Council's reserves may be required.

Directorates are working on recovery plans to mitigate the financial overspend for 2026/27 as much as possible, to minimise the use of reserves. The Council's recent history and track record reflects an ability to bring back in line this forecast position during the year.

1.6 Within the current forecast overspend of £2.9m for 2026/27, the Directorates have a forecast overspend of £7.9m, with a Central Services underspend of £5.0m. The Directorate pressures are offset by savings generated from the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and savings on inflationary budget assumptions. The Council's overspend position is due to the following overall issues:

- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care, due to demand and complexity of care requirements.
- Impact of the Local Government Pay Award 2026/27.
- Operational pressures in Waste Management mainly due to increased vehicle hire cost whilst the Council awaits delivery of the new Waste vehicles and delayed delivery of the route optimisation programme.
- Increased demand, market costs and operational pressures across Home to School Transport.
- Whilst much improved, residual pressures against income generation within Markets service and Country Parks.

2. Key Issues

MTFS Update – Planning Assumption

2.1 The MTFS has been updated across the four years 2026/27 to 2029/30 and models the following:

- Government Grant forecasts based on the impact of the FFR 2.0, based on robust information for 2026/27 to 2028/39, with a reasonable assumption made for 2029/30 which will be the first round of the next funding settlement.
- The Council's anticipated resources from Council Tax and Business Rates.
- The planning assumption for Council tax annual increases remains at 3%.
- Pay, Contractual, Price and Income inflation estimates including capital projects and National Living Wage. This includes maintaining the planning assumption of a 2% increase on fees and charges for 2027/28.
- Assumption that the agreed budget savings remain deliverable, within the agreed profile. Work is underway to review this position and has been tracked monthly through the Council's financial monitoring procedures.
- The ongoing costs of decisions made in previous budget rounds including financing costs of capital investment.
- Service demand and cost pressures that have been identified as requiring additional budget support as they cannot be mitigated at least in the short to medium term.

2.2 The Council's collection rates for Council Tax are holding up well in spite of ongoing cost of living difficulties for residents and businesses. In 2025/26 the Council's in-year collection rate of Council Tax remained above 96% at 96.74% and was the 3rd highest in-year rate of all 36 Metropolitan Councils. However, due to the impact of

the winding up order for Speciality Steel, the business rates collection was 95.83%, and as such the Council was 25th on the list of Metropolitan authorities in this area. Given the improved position with the Speciality Steel site and the Government's intended acquisition, the Council's business rates collection for 2026/27 is expected to rise back to its previous strong performance levels. As a result of these two collection rate outcomes overall, the Council Tax assumptions have been maintained at the same level with the Business Rates position softened in the MTFS.

2.3 The estimated impact of inflation and the fluctuations in energy and fuel prices have been factored into the MTFS update. The ongoing legacy of the increased inflation period continues to lead to further market price pressures for the Council's base costs and contracts. In addition, there are continued areas of escalating cost due to service demand and complexity pressures being experienced, in particular in social services, predominantly Children's. These service demand pressures are being reviewed and will need to be continually reviewed as part of the ongoing MTFS and Budget work. Work has been underway throughout 2026/27 to try to better understand the financial and service impacts of these key pressure areas, to better inform the MTFS.

2.4 A significant assumption the Council has made within the current MTFS update is that Government will continue to honour the inflationary uplift in a number of core resources that have historically been inflated by September CPI (noting inflation on business rates is set in regulation). The impact of every 1% of inflation on these core funding streams is the equivalent of £1m extra resource for the Council. As such the Council will need to continue to closely monitor announcements from Government between now and the provisional financial settlement.

Fair Funding Review (FFR) 2.0

2.5 A consultation on the Government's proposed approach to local authority funding reform through the Local Government Finance Settlement from 2026-27 was launched 20th June 2025 and ran through to 15th August 2025. The outcome of the review was announced with the Government's Budget November 2025. The consultation sought views on the approach to determining new funding allocations for local authorities and fire and rescue authorities through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

2.6 The consultation proposed a new methodology for the distribution of a large proportion of funding the Council receives as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement. The FFR 2.0 introduced a significant change in methodology for the distribution of Local Authority funding, known as the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA). The new methodology delivered a significant shift in the balance of funding back to a needs/demand basis; as such the Council was able to significantly gain from this revised approach.

2.7 This created a significant shift in how Local Government is funded and how the resources for Local Government are distributed. The focus of funding distribution moved more towards areas of greatest deprivation and need. The impact for RMBC of the Fair Funding Review, as confirmed with the Final Financial Settlement 2026, was a positive one, with an additional £22.6m of funding per year provided to the Council by 2028/29 (£13.2m by 2026/27 and £20.2m by 2027/28). Though this was

a significant shift in direction that the Council welcomes, the funding was necessary to address the demand and market pressures the Council had been seeing in recent years.

2.8 The Government's intention through the FFR 2.0 was to provide greater certainty to Councils on their available funding over the spending review period (2026/27 to 2028/29). Government therefore provided a 3-year spending period funding position; this creates greater certainty and assists long term planning. There was a clear change in approach towards the funding for Local Authorities and a clear acknowledgement that Local Authorities need more resources to support demand and cost pressures, which is positive for the sector.

New Pressures & Mitigations

2.9 Since the Council's Budget for 2026/27 was approved at Council on the 4th March 2026, there have been some financial challenges that will impact the Council's position for 2026/27 and that will continue to impact the Council's MTFS beyond 2026/27.

2.10 Following review of the 2026/27 position the following financial challenges have been identified and will need to be considered as part of the Council's Budget and MTFS setting process for 2027/28.

- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) resulting from market pressures driving up the cost of external placements and inflation driving up the cost of internal placements. The Council has made a significant impact in reducing the cost and volume of placements in recent years. An analysis of Looked After Children (LAC) numbers 2019/20 compared with 2025/26 shows that LAC have reduced by around 130. Had previous numbers of placements still been in place, at today's inflated prices, this would have cost the Council £10m more per year. However, the Council still has a large number of external residential placements, driving the bulk of the £6.0m in year placements overspend.

- The current MTFS position does not provide for increases in the CYPS Placements budget as it is still felt the current CYPS Budget provision is sufficient if the service is able to reduce the external residential placements as planned and complete the in-house residential programme with full occupancy. This position will be closely monitored through the budget setting process. There are, however, budget assumptions for contractual inflation for CYPS Placements built into the MTFS.

- Adult Social Care pressures resulting from market inflation driving up cost of care packages along with growing complexity of care needs and an ageing demographic leading to increased demand. The area of biggest overspend is working age adults with Learning Disabilities. The overspend in Learning Disabilities is largely made up of a small number of individuals with high-cost needs, including in Out of Borough placements that cater for individuals with the most complex needs and high-cost residential care. Work is well underway to understand the drivers behind these costs given the Council spends more per working age adult than the national average. The work will

assess where there are opportunities to ensure the most cost-efficient process is in place, to support the delivery of services within budget and the delivery of the saving of £0.9m approved as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27.

- The current MTFS position does not provide for a continuation of the Adult pressures that are being seen in the current financial year. Half of the pressures stem from a £0.9m saving target which has not yet been delivered but which the service is still confident of delivering. The bulk of the remaining pressure relates to the use of agency staff for the in-house care homes, again an issue that it is believed the service can address and reduce the cost pressure. This position will be closely monitored through the budget setting process. There are, however, budget assumptions for contractual inflation for Adults built into the MTFS.

- Home to School Transport pressures within Regeneration and Environment. These pressures are driven by a mix of new demand and operational pressures leading to an in year overspend of £1.1m. The Council's Budget 2026/27 addressed the historical budget challenge here with annual budget investment of £0.5m per year across the MTFS period. However, operational issues and market costs have taken the service further over budget.

- Waste Management service is forecasting to be £1.5m overspent in 2026/27. This is largely caused by overspends on transport, as the service continues to operate with a high number of hire and spare vehicles. It is expected that this position will improve once new refuse collection vehicles arrive next financial year. Work is continuing to achieve the route optimisation saving approved as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2025/26, however, difficulties in collection experienced during Autumn 2025/26 has meant that the planned removal of two routes has not yet been possible, though is still intended.

- Impact of the Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award.

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) came to an end during 2025/26 and was replaced by a smaller SYMCA Local Growth Fund allocation, with 2026/27 acting as a transition year. However, dialogue is underway with SYMCA regarding the future of this funding source and if the Council wishes to continue this activity, additional funding may be required.

- The Council's income generation position has continued to improve year on year. Whilst the Waterfront Café and Thrybergh Café are having a positive first year in operation, income generation is still behind the budgeted assumptions, including from Waleswood.

- There are financial challenges within the Council's Property and Facilities Management Service in relation to compliance works, repairs and maintenance and potentially further costs to accommodate once a full suite of stock condition surveys are in place. These pressures are currently being

managed within the overall Corporate Services Directorate, through wider savings and mitigating actions.

- The Council carried a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit of £23.293m before application of the Safety Valve grants at the end of 2025/26. Government confirmed as part of the Financial Settlement that Councils would receive a High Needs Stability Grant to offset 90% of this overall deficit. However, for Councils that been through the Safety Valve arrangement, the grants they had already received through this process would be factored into that 90%. As such the Council has received £20.530m through the Safety Valve and will receive £434k from the High Needs Stability Grant, leaving a net deficit for the Council as at the end of 2025/26 of £2.239m. It is assumed that Government will continue to fund 90% of DSG deficits moving forwards, meaning that the Council estimate to receive 90% of any in year deficits across 2026/27 and 2027/28, at which point any deficit not covered by grant will have to be funded by reserves (by end of March 2028). The total deficit the Council will have to fund from reserves by the end of March 2028, when the current Statutory Override ends is expected to be in the region of £4m.

- Following on from the end of the DSG Statutory Override ending in March 2028, the Council expects to still be supported by Government funding for 90% of the in year DSG deficits, leaving the Council to fund the remaining 10%. For 2028/29 this is expected to be £1.100m and £1.120m in 2029/30. These two DSG forecasts have been built into the MTFS though it should be noted and understood that the projection of receiving a continued 90% High Needs Stability grant based on in year deficits is the Council's best estimate. It is not a guaranteed position.

Following review of the 2026/27 position the following mitigations have been identified and will need to be considered as part of the Council's Budget and MTFS setting process for 2027/28.

- The Council's funding assumed across the spending review period will be inflated by September's CPI position. The current approved MTFS assumed a flat 2% inflationary position; however now that September's CPI position has been confirmed, funding assumptions, where relevant, have been lifted by 3.5%, generating a further £1m of income into the MTFS.

- The Council's biggest Business Rates payer Speciality Steel had been wound up which was creating a budget pressure on business rates collection. However, the Government have stepped in and whilst that does not mean the site will necessarily become operational it does mean its business rates liability, £3m a year, will be paid. The Council is only directly impacted by 49% of this debt, 1% impact South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services and 50% relates to central Government.

- The Government's Business Rates reset is still underway, however, as greater clarity on the process comes to light it is now expected that the impact for the Council will be positive, potentially seeing an increase in business rates retention of £2m. The process was due to complete in the summer of 2026

however Government are now indicating the outcome will be released in late December 2026 as part of the Provisional Financial Settlement.

- The Council's delivery of savings approved as part of previous Budget reports continues to progress well as set out below.

- The Council has reviewed its medium term financial forecasts for the Treasury Management Strategy and is able to release further savings into the MTFS position: £2m in 2027/28 rising to £3m across 2028/29 and 2029/30. These projections should always be treated cautiously, and the Council will need to keep a continued close watching brief on the financial markets as major economic shocks are not in the Council's control.

2.11 The Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27 outlined that social care cost pressures, Home to School Transport and the Local Government Pay Award presented the most significant risk to the Council's Budget. The legacy of the high inflation period remains with inflation and market pressures at the heart of most of the cost pressures identified above, either increasing the costs of current provision or through exacerbating the impact of rising demand. For example, CYPS placements are reducing in terms of placement numbers, however, inflation and market pressures are causing the base cost of all types of placements to rise significantly.

2.12 These pressures and mitigations are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Revised MTFS Position

Budget and MTFS Update	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£000	£000	£000
Approved MTFS Position per Budget and Council Tax Report 2026/27	**0**	**0**	**11,525**
Revised inflation assumptions: • Revised inflationary adjustments for CYPS Placements and Adults Care Packages • Reviewed inflation on core resources • Reviewed assumption on impact of Spending Review 29/30 • Other inflationary revisions	613	1,928	-1,250
Recovery Grant £9.3m used to remove 2028/29 budget gap. Possible option to change when grant is used.	TBC	TBC	TBC
Public Health Grant reviewed for core contract renewals.	297	290	350
Public Health Grant - held centrally from previous and future grant uplifts.	-297	-290	-350

Business Rates Baseline reset and Business Rates Growth	-2,323	-2,323	-2,323
DSG High Needs deficit projected at the end of 2027/28.	0	20,363	0
DSG High Needs Stability Grant Estimate **(Not confirmed)**	0	-16,354	0
DSG High Needs deficit – reserves required	0	-4,009	0
DSG High Needs deficit pressures 2028/29 onwards	0	11,000	11,200
DSG High Needs deficit pressures - DfE support longer term **(not confirmed)**		-9,900	-10,080
Revised Treasury Management Savings projections	-2,000	-3,000	-3,000
Revised Position	**-3,711**	**-2,296**	**6,072**

2.13 Following the review of the MTFS pressures and mitigations the current MTFS forecasts present surpluses ahead of a large budget gap in 2029/30. The Council may wish to utilise its positive short term position to consider investments but also plan for the 2029/30 challenge. Although there is a more substantial pressure in 2029/30, given the level of change that can happen across this period and the uncertainty that exists within the local authority funding environment, there is no requirement to address this pressure as part of the current Budget and MTFS update. This position will need to take into account the outcomes of the Financial Settlement and choices on budget policy proposals on levels of Council Tax, reserves, fees and charges and any budget savings or investments.

Delivery of Agreed Budget Savings

2.14 The MTFS update assumes delivery of the remaining previously agreed budget savings. The Council's Financial Outturn report 2025/26 reported that £0.4m of prior year savings remained undelivered. In addition, the Budget and Council Tax report 2026/27 included the delivery of £3.2m of new savings, giving £3.6m to be delivered during 2026/27. Currently, £2.5m of delivery has been secured. The table below shows the total amount of all savings to be delivered during 2026/27 and the amount that has been delivered to date.

Table 2: Previously agreed savings

Directorate	2026/27 Saving to be delivered £'000	Secured as at 30th September 2026 £'000	Still to be delivered £'000
Corporate Services	704	704	0
Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	1,089	237	852
Children's and Young People Services	800	800	0
Regeneration and Environment	1,040	720	320
Total	**3,633**	**2,461**	**1,172**

Activity is ongoing to deliver the remaining £1.2m of savings that relate to Working Age Adults £0.9m, Waste Route Optimisation £0.3m and Waleswood £40k.

Summary MTFS 2027/28 to 2029/30

2.15 The MTFS, taking into account the issues described in this report, is summarised in Table 3 below. Following the review of the MTFS pressures and mitigations the current MTFS forecasts present surpluses ahead of a large budget gap in 2029/30. The main drivers of this budget gap are as follows, though as reported above, some of these pressures are mitigated;

- Financing impact of previous Capital Investment Programmes**.**
- Ongoing impact of Local Government Pay Awards.
- End of Treasury Management temporary savings plan - **£4m** per annum.
- Ongoing impact of annual funding improvements being outweighed by the annual projections for demand pressures.

Table 3: Revised MTFS

	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £0
Resources			
Council Tax and Business Rates	259,101	264,370	272,721
Government Grant	153,103	155,353	159,812
Total Resources	**412,204**	**419,723**	**432,532**
Expenditure			
Base Budget Requirement at 2026/27 pay and prices	402,023	398,523	410,723
Inflation Provision	13,073	25,392	37,548
New inflationary pressures and opportunities	613	1,928	-1,250
Treasury Management Strategy Savings	-2,000	-3,000	-3,000
Business Rates Reset & Growth	-2,323	-2,323	-2,323
Budget Savings previously approved	-2,893	-3,093	-3,093
Total Expenditure	**408,493**	**417,426**	**438,604**
Funding Gap/-surplus (Pre-Settlement)	**-3,711**	**-2,296**	**6,072**

2.16 It is important to note that this position is before the exact amount of Government grant funding for councils is provided within the Finance Settlement. This is also a technical update of the MTFS before any decisions on levels of Council Tax, reserves, fees and charges and any budget savings or investments.

2.17 Updated MTFS information will therefore form part of the Budget and Council Tax 2027/28 report to Council in March 2027 which will set out the full details of Budget and Council Tax proposals for 2027/28 alongside the final MTFS estimates for the medium term.

2.18 Given the financial position outlined for the Council, work is well underway with Executive Directors to consider opportunities for increasing the operational efficiency and effectiveness of services.

Reserves Position

2.19 In considering the Council's MTFS position it is important to be aware of the Council's reserves position, as set out below in Table 4. The Council's reserves have been steadily built back up in recent years to a robust position and one that covers the Council's key financial risks. The Council's reserves are also, following positive outturn positions in recent years and robust financial management, projected to be £10m higher than they were projected to be when setting the 2023/24 Budget. This level of reserves gives the Council a more robust financial position overall and the ability to potentially manage short term pressures on a temporary basis.

Table 4: Reserves Position

Corporate Reserves	**Projected Balance as at 31 March 2027**	**Budgeted Movement 27/28**	**Projected Balance as at 31 March 2028**	**Budgeted Movement 28/29**	**Projected Balance as at 31 March 2029**
	£m	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**	**£m**
General Fund Minimum Balance	**25.0**	**0.0**	**25.0**	**0.0**	**25.0**
Corporate Reserves					
Budget and Financial Strategy	14.1	4.9	19.0	-11.9	7.1
Local Plan Reserve	2.2	0.0	2.2	0.0	2.2
Business Rates	4.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	4.0
Corporate Revenue Grants Reserve	3.1	0.0	3.1	0.0	3.1
Local Council Tax Support Grant	0.8	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.8
Collection Fund Income Guarantee Grant	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
PFI leisure	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.4
Selective Licensing Reserve	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Treasury Management Savings	7.0	0.0	7.0	0.0	7.0
Total	**31.7**	**4.9**	**36.6**	**-11.9**	**24.7**
Total General Fund Reserves	**56.7**	**4.9**	**61.6**	**-11.9**	**49.7**

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 In refreshing the MTFS the Council has made several financial assumptions as detailed within the main body of this report. Whilst various scenarios for how Government funding could be changed and the Council's costs could vary linked to in-year and potential future cost pressures, the update presented is the Council's current MTFS.

3.2 Given the level of uncertainty within financial markets, global factors and their impact on inflation, energy and the level of Government funding, elements of the MTFS remain complex to project. As such it is expected that when the Government releases the Provisional Financial Settlement for 2027/28, there may be changes to the availability of public sector funding.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The Council consulted on budget proposals for 2026/27 ahead of the approval of the Budget and Council Tax 2026/27 report at Council in March 2026. Consultation on the 2027/28 budget is planned to be undertaken from December 2026 to January 2027, specific dates to be confirmed as the process continues.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The information, proposals and recommendations will feed into the development of specific budget proposals for 2027/28 within the Budget and Council Tax 2027/28 report to Cabinet in February 2027 and Council in March 2027.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The financial implications are set out in the report. Following the review of the MTFS pressures and mitigations the current MTFS forecasts present surpluses ahead of a large budget gap in 2029/30. The Council will need to utilise its positive short term position to consider investments but also plan for the 2029/30 challenge. Although there is a more substantial pressure in 2029/30, given the level of change that can happen across this period and the uncertainty that exists within the local authority funding environment, there is no requirement to address this pressure as part of the current Budget and MTFS update. It is however important to note that this position is before the exact amount of Government grant funding for councils is provided within the Finance Settlement. This is also a technical update of the MTFS before any decisions on levels of Council Tax as part of the annual budget-setting process.

6.2 The Council's September financial monitoring projects an overspend of £2.9m, due in the main to pressures in social care demand and complexity, income shortfalls in Regeneration and Environment and the impact of the Local Government Pay Award. The Council is working towards mitigating this remaining forecast overspend with a view to balancing the outturn for 2026/27 so that use of reserves is not required.

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

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The implications are as set out in the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are no implications arising from the recommendation in the report.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Reviewing and updating the Council's MTFS does not in itself affect the Council's carbon emissions, those of its contractors or the Borough of Rotherham. However, cost pressures detailed in the present MTFS review may affect delivery of the Council's climate change commitments. In some cases, there are financial 'co-benefits' of climate change actions: more efficient waste vehicle routes and the delivery of new vehicles should have financial benefits as well as reduced carbon emissions.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 There are no implications for partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Risks and mitigation are described in the report.

14. Accountable Officers

Rob Mahon, Service Director – Financial Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	28/10/26
Executive Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/10/26
Service Manager, Property and Commercial/Deputy Monitoring Officer, Legal Services	Stuart Fletcher	26/10/26

Report Author: *Rob Mahon, Service Director Financial Services*
01709 254518
Rob.Mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's website.

Appendix 1

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

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

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

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

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

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

1. Title	
Title: Medium Term Financial Strategy	
Directorate: Finance and Customer Services	**Service area:** Financial Services
Lead person: Rob Mahon	**Contact number:** 01709 8254518
Is this a: ☐ **Strategy / Policy** ☑ **Service / Function** ☐ **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The report sets out a technical update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2029/30. The information within the report will support the development of detailed budget proposals for 2027/28. No changes to the Council's approved budget and financial strategy are proposed within the report.

Appendix 1

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

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

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

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

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?		✓
Could the proposal affect service users?		✓
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?		✓
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		✓
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		✓
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		✓

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

The report is a summary report of the Council's current Medium Term Financial Strategy, it makes no recommendations for action around investments, savings or anything that would change current approaches of the Council's service delivery.

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

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

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

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

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society

by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation. Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).
• **How have you considered equality and diversity?** N/A
• **Key findings** N/A
• **Actions** N/A

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	N/A
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	N/A
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	N/A

5. Governance, ownership and approval

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

Name	Job title	Date
Rob Mahon	Service Director – Financial Services	21/10/26

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	21/10/26
Report title and date	Medium Term Financial Strategy
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	Cabinet – 16/11/26
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	21/10/26

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Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified:			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across the Borough as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from transport?	Decrease	The delivery of new waste management vehicles as well as planned route optimisation work should reduce fuel use and deliver financial benefits while reducing carbon emissions.	None	N/A	Emissions from the council's corporate fleet vehicles are included with the Council's greenhouse gas emissions monitoring.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				
Identify any emissions impacts associated with this decision which have not been covered by the above fields:					

Will the proposal affect Council services' resilience to climate change, or the capacity of people living in the Borough to adapt to climate change? Reviewing and updating the Council's MTFS does not in itself affect the capacity of people living in the Borough to adapt to climate change, though it does support Council services' resilience indirectly, by ensuring their financial sustainability.

Provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures: Reviewing and updating the Council's MTFS does not in itself affect the Council's carbon emissions, those of its contractors or the Borough of Rotherham. However, cost pressures detailed in the present MTFS review may affect delivery of the Council's climate change commitments. In some cases, there are financial 'co-benefits' of climate change actions: more efficient waste vehicle routes and the delivery of new vehicles should have financial benefits as well as reduced carbon emissions.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Rob Mahon Assistant Director of Financial Services Financial Services Finance and Customer Services
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA712 Katie Rockett Climate Change Officer

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Maintained Schools Long-Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP)

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
Judith Badger, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Report Author(s)
Kevin Miller Head of Facilities Management & Compliance
kevin.miller@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides an update on the maintained schools condition survey programme and the development of the Long-Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP). It seeks Cabinet's agreement to the principles for assessing the survey findings and prioritising future investment, taking account of building condition, statutory compliance, operational risk, available funding and delivery capacity. This will include engagement between Property and Facilities Services and Children and Young People's Services to ensure that priorities reflect school place sufficiency, future educational demand and planned academy conversions.

The 2026/27 Capital Programme totals £1,679,613, comprising £728,079 of Department for Education School Condition Allocation funding and £951,534 carried forward from previous years. It addresses priority building condition and compliance works. The LTMP will establish a consistent evidence base for prioritising future maintenance and lifecycle replacement across the 17 settings identified in this report.

Initial modelling indicates a potential investment requirement exceeding £20 million, subject to completion and validation of surveys. This is an indicative estimate, not an approved budget or a commitment to spend within 2027–2030. The final programme will reflect assessed risk, educational need, available funding and delivery capacity.

No additional funding approval is sought through this report. A further report following the surveys will set out the quantified backlog, investment priorities, funding options and proposed delivery programme. The LTMP will be refreshed annually, with progress and the forward programme reported to Cabinet.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the commencement of the maintained schools stock condition and asset verification survey programme, funded through existing capital budgets.

2. Note the emerging evidence that condition, compliance and lifecycle investment requirements may exceed available Department for Education School Condition Allocation funding, subject to completion and validation of the surveys.

3. Agree the proposed principles for assessing the condition survey findings and prioritising future investment, including joint working with Children and Young People's Services on school place sufficiency, future educational demand and planned academy conversions.

4. Agree to receive a further report following completion of the stock condition surveys setting out the quantified maintenance backlog, prioritised investment requirements, proposed programme of works and associated funding requirements.

List of Appendices Included
Appendix1: Current Schools Capital Programme 2026-27 Summary
Appendix 2: Equality Analysis Screening Assessment - Maintained Schools LTMP
Appendix 3: Carbon Impact Assessment - Maintained Schools LTMP

Background Papers
None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Improving Lives Select Commission 03 November 2026

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Maintained Schools Long-Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP)

1. Background

1.1 The Council retains responsibility as asset owner for the strategic management, long-term condition and capital investment requirements of maintained school buildings across the borough. These assets support the delivery of education services and play a vital role in ensuring staff, children and young people have access to safe, compliant and suitable learning environments. Whilst schools are responsible for the day-to-day operation and occupation of their premises, the Council has a responsibility to protect the long-term integrity, functionality and sustainability of the maintained school estate through appropriate asset management and capital investment.

1.2 Maintained schools receive devolved revenue budgets and are responsible for funding and managing routine repairs, planned preventative maintenance, statutory servicing, inspections and the day-to-day upkeep of their buildings. This includes ensuring that their buildings' systems are appropriately maintained, serviced and operated in accordance with statutory and operational requirements.

1.3 Capital investment within maintained schools is funded principally through the DfE School Condition Allocation (SCA). This funding is intended to support priority capital major works that ensure school buildings remain safe, warm and dry and that major building infrastructure continues to operate effectively. Typical projects include roof replacements, heating and boiler renewals, fire safety systems, electrical infrastructure, structural repairs and significant building fabric improvements which are beyond the scope of normal school revenue budgets.

1.4 The Council's role is therefore to ensure that major building components and infrastructure are maintained, renewed and replaced through planned capital investment, whilst schools continue to manage routine maintenance through their devolved revenue budgets.

1.5 For 2026/27, the Council has received £728,079 in DfE School Condition Allocation funding together with £951,534 of carried-forward funding from previous years, providing a total programme allocation of £1,679,613.

1.6 The annual programme for 2026/27 continues to deliver works identified through the DfE surveys and, although limited in detail, they bring some focus to carrying out safeguarding, statutory compliance and minor structural defects, ensuring that available funding is deployed where it delivers the greatest benefit.

1.7 The maintained education estate currently comprises 17 settings: 13 maintained schools, 3 maintained nursery schools and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. The current 2026/27 Capital Programme does not provide works at every setting. Appendix 1 records the individual schemes currently planned or being delivered and should not be read as a list of 17 separate schools

or settings, because some sites have more than one scheme, and settings with no current scheme do not appear. The LTMP will consider the condition, compliance, lifecycle and investment requirements of all 17 settings.

1.8 The LTMP covers the settings/schools for which the Council manages the School Condition Allocation. Voluntary-aided schools have separate capital funding arrangements through their responsible bodies and are not included in this programme. Their governing bodies generally hold responsibility for capital expenditure on school buildings, with the Council retaining responsibility for playing fields.

1.9 Regularly updated condition surveys will support maintenance planning, lifecycle replacement and capital investment decisions across the maintained school estate.

1.10 Whilst condition information is available from Department for Education surveys and other historic records, the information currently available does not provide the level of detail required to fully understand the condition, compliance, lifecycle and capital investment requirements of the maintained school estate. In particular, it does not consistently identify the actions, priorities, timescales and investment requirements necessary to maintain school buildings in a planned and sustainable manner over the medium to long term.

1.11 After two failed attempts due to market conditions and availability of suitably qualified surveyors, a contract is now in place to carry out stock validation and condition surveys across the estate with focus being placed on maintained schools over the coming months. The stock condition and asset verification programme will therefore provide a more comprehensive evidence base to support future investment planning, prioritisation and the development of the LTMP.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Development of a Long-Term Maintenance Plan

2.1.1 The Council currently invests available DfE School Condition Allocation funding in priority capital works across maintained schools. The 2026/27 programme of £1.679m has been developed from the condition information currently available, including DfE survey findings, known building failures and defects, statutory compliance requirements, project development work and issues reported through engagement with schools.

2.1.2 Whilst this investment continues to address the highest-priority risks, the work undertaken to date indicates that the scale of future investment required across the maintained school estate may exceed the level of funding currently available through annual DfE allocations.

2.1.3 The LTMP will build on existing project and survey information to provide a consistent, estate-wide basis for prioritising investment and planning future works.

2.1.4 Development and implementation of the LTMP will be undertaken jointly by Property and Facilities Services and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS).

2.1.5 Building condition, statutory compliance and lifecycle replacement requirements will form the basis for investment planning and future prioritisation, while ensuring an approach linked to pupil place planning, educational sufficiency requirements, future demand, operational considerations and wider strategic education priorities.

2.1.6 The LTMP will be maintained as a live plan and refreshed annually to reflect changes in asset condition, compliance risk, pupil place planning, educational need, funding availability and delivery progress.

2.1.7 An annual update will be presented to Cabinet setting out delivery against the current programme and the proposed forward programme. The update will identify works completed, current priorities, emerging requirements, anticipated outcomes, available funding and any further decisions required from Cabinet.

2.2 Emerging Asset and Infrastructure Pressures

2.2.1 There is increasing evidence that many elements of the maintained school estate are approaching or have exceeded their expected operational life.

2.2.2 The heating replacement scheme at Broom Valley Primary School illustrates the substantial investment that can be required when ageing infrastructure needs renewal. Detailed design and market testing have identified the complexity of the replacement works and the effect of construction cost pressures.

2.2.3 Whilst Broom Valley remains a priority project, it also highlights a wider challenge facing the maintained school estate. Similar pressures are anticipated across roofing systems, heating infrastructure, mechanical and electrical installations, fire safety systems and key building fabric elements as more detailed condition information becomes available.

2.2.4 Without planned investment, the Council faces increasing risks associated with:

- Failure of ageing building infrastructure.
- Growing maintenance backlogs.
- Escalating reactive repair costs.
- Increased health and safety and compliance risks.
- Disruption to educational delivery.
- Reduced resilience of school buildings.

2.2.5 The Council's current programme enables critical risks to be managed but does not provide sufficient capacity to systematically address all emerging condition and lifecycle replacement requirements across the portfolio.

2.3 Condition Survey Programme and Evidence Base

2.3.1 To establish an accurate understanding of future investment requirements, Facilities Management has commissioned a comprehensive programme of stock condition and asset verification surveys across the maintained school estate. Survey mobilisation is complete, and inspections commenced in August 2026. Upon completion (Q1 2027), the programme will provide the first comprehensive assessment of:

- Building condition and deterioration trends.
- Statutory compliance requirements.
- Maintenance and renewal liabilities.
- Lifecycle replacement needs.
- Future capital investment priorities.
- Risks to operational continuity and educational provision.

2.3.2 The survey programme is a critical component of the LTMP and will enable future investment decisions to be based upon assessed risk, asset condition and compliance priorities rather than reacting to failures when they occur.

2.3.3 Completion of the survey programme will enable the Council to assess and prioritise requirements consistently across the maintained estate. The findings will be considered alongside CYPS pupil place planning, statutory compliance, operational risk, educational need, affordability and deliverability.

2.3.4 This will enable the Council to establish a clear programme of works setting out the proposed sequence of investment, anticipated outcomes, funding requirement and delivery timescales. Although the LTMP is expected to cover a medium-term planning period, its final duration and delivery profile will be determined following completion of the surveys and consideration of the resources available.

2.4 Sufficiency of Current Funding and Future Investment Requirements

2.4.1 The Council currently relies primarily on annual DfE School Condition Allocation funding to deliver capital investment within maintained schools.

2.4.2 A significant proportion of annual funding is increasingly being directed toward responding to failures in ageing infrastructure, leaving limited capacity to address wider deterioration or progressively reduce backlog maintenance. Consequently, investment is heavily focused on managing the highest-risk priorities rather than providing a sustainable long-term solution.

2.4.3 Early review, existing asset intelligence and preliminary investment modelling indicate a potential investment requirement in excess of £20

million. This estimate assumes that the condition and investment needs identified through future surveys are broadly consistent with those found at schools assessed to date, particularly where there has been limited investment over a prolonged period. The modelling draws on known condition and compliance pressures, anticipated lifecycle replacement of major building components and infrastructure, and current project cost evidence. It is intended to provide an initial indication of the potential scale of the challenge pending completion of the comprehensive survey programme.

2.4.4 The period 2027 to 2030 is an initial medium-term planning horizon and does not represent a requirement to spend the full estimated amount within four years. The programme may need to be phased over a longer period, depending on the completed survey evidence, the urgency and sequencing of identified works, affordability, funding availability and the Council's capacity to deliver. The £20 million estimate is not a definitive funding requirement and will be refined through the condition survey programme and subsequent prioritisation process.

2.4.5 The LTMP will identify:

- The minimum investment required to ensure all maintained schools remain safe, warm, dry, compliant and operational.
- The optimum level of investment required to reduce backlog maintenance and improve long-term asset sustainability.
- A realistic and affordable delivery programme based upon risk, priority and available resources.

2.4.6 A further report will be presented once all surveys are completed and will include:

- The findings of the condition survey programme.
- The quantified maintenance backlog.
- Prioritised condition and compliance risks.
- Recommended investment priorities.
- The proposed Long-Term Maintenance Plan, using 2027–2030 as an initial planning horizon, with its final duration and phasing subject to survey findings, priorities, available funding and delivery capacity.
- An annual prioritised plan
- The capital funding requirement necessary to support the strategy.

2.4.7 Funding options and programme phasing will be assessed following completion of the surveys. Any funding proposal will be subject to separate consideration through the Council’s budget and approval arrangements.

2.5 Delivery Capacity and Market Readiness

2.5.1 Alongside the development of the LTMP, Property and Facilities Services is reviewing the Council's capacity to successfully plan, procure and deliver a larger capital investment programme across the maintained school estate.

2.5.2 Understanding the level of investment required is only part of the challenge. The Council must also ensure that it has sufficient project management, technical, procurement and contractor resources and capacity to deliver future programmes effectively.

2.5.3 Delivering capital works within schools is particularly complex and requires careful planning around school calendars, examinations, safeguarding requirements and operational activities. Major projects are typically undertaken during school holiday periods wherever possible to minimise disruption to pupils and educational delivery.

2.5.4 Facilities Management and Building Design Services are therefore reviewing:

- Programme and project management capacity.
- Technical design and surveying resources.
- Procurement and contract management arrangements.
- Access to suitably qualified contractors and specialist suppliers.
- Framework and commissioning arrangements.
- Capacity to deliver multiple projects simultaneously.
- Workforce planning and succession arrangements.

The delivery review will assess whether eligible project management, design and technical costs can be met through the capital programme, subject to Finance confirming the applicable accounting treatment and funding conditions. Any costs that cannot be capitalised will be identified separately and considered through the budget process. No additional staffing or revenue commitment is proposed through this report.

2.6 Academy Conversion and Landlord Responsibilities

2.6.1 The Council remains the responsible body and landlord for maintained schools until the date that any individual school formally converts to academy status. During this period, the Council retains responsibility for the strategic management of the asset and for ensuring that major building infrastructure, capital investment and statutory landlord obligations are appropriately discharged.

2.6.2 Maintained Schools themselves remain responsible for managing their devolved revenue budgets, including routine repairs, maintenance, servicing, inspections and day-to-day building management. The Council's role is to manage wider capital investment requirements associated with the integrity, sustainability and long-term operation of maintained school buildings, including major lifecycle replacement and renewal of infrastructure such as roofs, heating systems, fire safety systems, electrical infrastructure and structural elements.

2.6.3 On academy conversion, responsibility for the operation, maintenance and capital planning of school premises transfers in accordance with the agreed conversion documents and any lease. Any continuing Council obligations

will be determined by those agreements and the applicable legal requirements.

2.6.4 While a school remains maintained, investment priorities will be assessed consistently against condition, statutory compliance, safety, educational need and available resources. Any conversion arrangements will be considered with CYPS, Legal Services and the relevant trust to clarify responsibility for planned or ongoing works and support continuity of education.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option 1: Continue with reactive and DfE survey approach

3.1.1 This option would continue the existing approach, prioritising projects within annual DfE allocations.

3.1.2 Whilst this would allow delivery of some priority schemes, it would not address increasing backlog maintenance requirements or provide a long-term solution to emerging condition liabilities.

3.1.3 The current DfE surveys provide useful condition information but do not assess all aspects of the works that may be required within school buildings. Their scope and level of detail do not consistently capture the full range of condition, compliance, mechanical and electrical, lifecycle replacement and operational requirements. Continuing to rely on this information alone would therefore not provide a complete evidence base for assessing liabilities or prioritising future investment across the maintained school estate.

3.2 Option 2: Agree the principles for assessing survey findings and prioritising investment through the Maintained Schools Long-Term Maintenance Plan

3.2.1 This option would establish the principles for assessing the condition survey findings and prioritising future investment, taking account of asset condition, statutory compliance, operational risk, affordability and deliverability. Property and Facilities Services would work jointly with Children and Young People's Services to ensure that priorities reflect school place sufficiency, future educational demand and planned academy conversions.

3.2.2 The LTMP would provide the evidence base for longer-term financial planning, reduce reliance on reactive intervention and establish a clearer programme of works linked to defined outcomes and delivery timescales.

3.2.3 The associated funding requirement will be developed through the Council's budget and capital programme processes and will be subject to separate approval.

3.2.4 The strategy would support:

- Long-term financial planning.
- Better value for money.
- Reduced reactive maintenance in the longer term.
- Improved compliance.
- Improved resilience and sustainability of educational assets.

This is the recommended option.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Maintained schools will be informed of the proposed approach through the Local Authority Maintained Schools (LAMS) forum. Engagement with individual schools will inform survey findings, priorities and the planning of proposed works. Approval of specific investment proposals will be considered through the subsequent LTMP report and relevant budget decisions.

4.2 Internal consultation will take place with CYPS and Finance as outlined in the report in order to prioritise works accordingly.

5. Timetable

5.1

Milestones	Target Date
Survey mobilisation and scheduling completed	August 2026
Pilot survey validations and quality checks	Autumn 2026
2027 DfE-funded Projects Plan & Schedule (BAU)	Winter 2026/27
Completion of all Maintained School Surveys	Q1 2027/28
Completion of prioritised Long-Term Maintenance Plan	Spring 2027
Presentation of Capital investment needs and strategy	May 2027
Delivery of phased programme of capital works	2027–2030: initial planning horizon only. Subject to survey findings, priorities, available funding, delivery capacity and subsequent approvals.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The Council's maintained school capital programme is funded through the Department for Education (DfE) School Condition Allocation (SCA). For 2026/27, available resources total £1.680m, comprising £728,079 of SCA funding and £951,534 of unspent allocation carried forward from previous years.

6.2 Whilst annual SCA funding allocations support the delivery of priority condition, compliance and health and safety works, emerging evidence indicates that future investment requirements across the maintained

school estate are likely to exceed the level of annual DfE capital funding allocations. This increases the risk of a growing maintenance backlog and limits the Council's ability to address wider lifecycle replacement requirements.

6.3 No additional capital funding approval is being sought through this report. A programme of condition and asset surveys is underway to establish the scale of future condition works and investment needs across the maintained school estate.

6.4 Following completion of this work, the findings and proposed LTMP will be considered through the Council's budget and internal governance processes. A further report will then be presented to Cabinet setting out the quantified maintenance backlog, proposed programme of works, delivery timescales and associated funding requirements.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The recommended proposals are in accordance with the conditions of use of the current Department for Education fund.

7.2 Furthermore, the proposals meet the Local Authority's fundamental statutory duties and obligations under s542 Education Act 1996, the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and s22 School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations set out in the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The programme directly supports safe, healthy and effective learning environments for children and young people attending maintained schools.

9.2 Investment in school buildings reduces the risk of service disruption arising from building failures and supports continuity of education provision.

9.3 Alignment of the LTMP with CYPS pupil place planning will ensure that proposed investment takes account of future educational demand, sufficiency requirements and any planned changes to provision. This will support investment in the appropriate settings at the appropriate time.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 No direct equality or human rights implications have been identified at this stage. This report seeks approval for the development and delivery of the LTMP and the supporting evidence base rather than approval of specific investment proposals.

10.2 The Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed and updated as part of the annual refresh of the LTMP and will inform future reports presented to Cabinet.

10.3 The LTMP will support the provision of safe, warm, dry, compliant and accessible learning environments across the maintained school estate.

10.4 As the LTMP is developed and refreshed, a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to assess the potential implications of proposed investment priorities, programme delivery and funding decisions. This will ensure that future investment proposals appropriately consider the needs of children and young people, protected groups, accessibility requirements and wider equality impacts.

10.5 The Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed and updated as part of the annual refresh of the LTMP and will inform future reports presented to Cabinet.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 The stock condition and asset verification surveys include consideration of energy performance, asset efficiency, lifecycle replacement requirements and opportunities to improve the environmental performance of the maintained school estate.

11.2 As the LTMP is developed, individual investment priorities will be reviewed to identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and support the Council's wider sustainability objectives, where these can be achieved alongside the primary requirement to maintain safe, warm, dry and compliant educational environments.

11.3 The LTMP will be maintained as a live programme and refreshed annually. As part of this process, carbon reduction opportunities, energy performance improvements and associated environmental impacts will be reviewed and reassessed to ensure that future investment proposals continue to support the Council's climate change and carbon reduction ambitions where practicable and affordable.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The development and implementation of the LTMP will require ongoing engagement with maintained schools, Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), the Department for Education and other relevant partners. The LTMP will provide a clearer evidence base to support future discussions regarding school condition, investment priorities, pupil place planning and long-term educational provision across the borough.

12.2 Maintained schools will benefit from improved visibility of future investment priorities, anticipated works programmes and longer-term asset planning arrangements. This will support forward planning and assist schools in

understanding how condition, compliance and lifecycle requirements are being assessed and prioritised across the maintained estate.

12.3 The development of the LTMP will also support more informed engagement with external funding bodies and potential delivery partners by providing a consistent understanding of condition liabilities, investment requirements and programme priorities across the maintained school estate.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Risk

Failure to secure sufficient long-term investment may result in:

- Increased maintenance backlog.
- Deteriorating building condition.
- Escalating reactive repair costs.
- Increased compliance and safety risks.
- Greater likelihood of infrastructure failure.
- Potential disruption to education delivery.
- Reduced ability to prioritise investment based on evidence and strategic need.
- Missed opportunities to align asset investment with CYPS pupil place planning and educational priorities.
- Reduced ability to secure and target future external funding and investment opportunities.

13.2 Mitigation

The risks identified within this report are mitigated through:

- Completion of the stock condition and asset verification survey programme.
- Development of a comprehensive LTMP based on consistent asset data and evidence.
- Joint working between Property and Facilities Services and Children and Young People's Services to align investment priorities with educational need.
- Annual review and refresh of the LTMP to ensure priorities remain aligned with condition, compliance, funding and service requirements.
- Future reporting to Cabinet on investment priorities, programme delivery, funding requirements and emerging risks.
- Development of a prioritised programme of works informed by condition, compliance, operational risk, educational need and affordability.

14. Accountable Officers

Kevin Miller Head of Facilities Management and Compliance

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/10/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	20/10/26

Report Author: *Kevin Miller – Head of Facilities Management and Compliance – kevin.miller@rotherham.gov.uk*

This report is published on the Council's website.

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Appendix 1

Current Schools Capital Programme 2026-27 Summary

Site	Output Description	Cost (£)	Priority	Procurement Status
Eastwood Village	Deck waterproofing works	168,357	1	Tender award approved
Badsley Moor Primary	Heating upgrade works (25/26 commitment)	236,146	1	Tender award approved
Badsley Moor Primary	Roofing works	108,806	1	Tender award approved
Broom Valley Primary	Heating replacement (phased over 2 years)	1,200,000	1	To be procured – to take place 27/28
Rawmarsh Thorogate Primary	Fire alarm upgrade	54,580	1	Tender award approved.
Sitwell Infants School	3 boilers including heat emitters	100,000	1	To be procured – To take place 27/28
Wales Primary - Nursery	Modular Building Roof Leak	96,146	1	Tender award approved
Anston Park Juniors	Roof Leak	9,331	1	Quote approved
Urgent Minor Works		75,000	1	To be procured – Ad-hoc
Sub Total Priority 1 projects		**2,048,366**		
Blackburn Primary	2 toilet block to be upgraded	160,000	2	To be procured
Rawmarsh Rosehill Junior School	Flat roofing works	100,000	2	To be procured
Rockingham Junior & Infants School	Replace 2 hot water cylinders	75,000	2	To be procured
Fixed wire testing		15,000	2	To be procured
Sub Total Priority 2 projects		**350,000**		

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PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

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

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

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

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

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

1. Title	
Title: Maintained Schools Capital Investment Strategy and Long-Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP) 2027-2030	
Directorate: Corporate Services	**Service area:** **Property and Facilities Services**
Lead person: Kevin Miller	**Contact:** Kevin.miller@rotherham.gov.uk
Is this a: ☐ **Strategy / Policy** ☒ **Service / Function** ☐ **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The report seeks Cabinet approval for the development and implementation of a Long-Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP) for the Council's maintained school estate. The proposal establishes an evidence-based approach to assessing building condition, statutory compliance, lifecycle replacement requirements and future capital investment priorities across maintained schools, nurseries and the Pupil Referral Unit. It does not approve specific construction projects, service changes or reductions in service provision. At this stage, no negative impacts have been identified for any protected characteristic group. The proposal focuses on the development of asset intelligence,

condition surveys and long-term investment planning that will support the Council's ability to maintain safe, compliant and accessible educational environments. Once the LTMP is finalised a full EIA will be completed for the scheme and presented as a future Cabinet report.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

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

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

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

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?		no
Could the proposal affect service users?		no
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?		no
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		no
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		no
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		no

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

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

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

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

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

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

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

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

Ensuring through future works consideration is given to service and school disruption with Protected groups considered.

The proposal is expected to have a positive or neutral impact across these groups by supporting the continued provision of school buildings that are safe, operational, accessible and fit for educational use.
The proposal supports the Council's responsibilities to provide safe and appropriate environments for the delivery of education and contributes positively to the wellbeing, dignity and safety of children, young people, school staff and visitors

- **Key findings**

This assessment concludes that:
No disproportionate adverse impacts on any protected characteristic groups have been identified at this stage.
As the Long-Term Maintenance Plan develops and individual investment priorities emerge, detailed project-specific Equalities Impact Assessments will be completed where appropriate. Equality considerations, including accessibility requirements and the needs of protected groups, will continue to inform future investment decisions and subsequent Cabinet reports.
Screening Outcome
- No major equality impacts identified at this stage.
- Full Equality Impact Assessment not currently required.
- Equality considerations to be reviewed as the LTMP develops and future investment decisions are brought forward.

- **Actions**

Impact on Children, Young People and Vulnerable Groups
The maintained school estate supports children and young people throughout the borough, including pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerable groups.
The LTMP will assist the Council in:
- Maintaining safe learning environments.
- Reducing the risk of building failures that may disrupt education.
- Supporting accessibility improvements where identified through condition surveys and future investment planning.
- Prioritising compliance works that contribute to the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors.
- Supporting equality of access to education through the maintenance of suitable school accommodation.

At this point, a Part B is not yet needed as this is the development of principles and plan, with no impact as evidence and data is gathered to inform that plan. An Equality Analysis will be complete at the stage of submitting the formal plan to Cabinet in Spring 2027.	
Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	30/11/2026
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	Est. 30/5/2027
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Kevin Miller

5. Governance, ownership and approval

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

Name	Job title	Date
Kevin Fisher	Service Director Property and Facilities	19/10/2026

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	14/10/2026
Report title and date	Maintained Schools Long-Term Maintenance Plan (LTMP)
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	16/11/2026 (Cabinet)
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	14/10/2026

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified:			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across the Borough as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	Decrease	Opportunities for future carbon reduction measures.		The Council will seek, where practical and affordable, to integrate sustainability and carbon reduction objectives into future asset investment decisions by: • Considering energy performance during project development. • Evaluating low-carbon alternatives during lifecycle replacement projects. • Incorporating sustainable procurement principles where appropriate. • Reviewing opportunities for carbon reduction as part of annual LTMP updates.	The development of the LTMP is expected to strengthen the Council's understanding of the carbon performance of the maintained school estate and provide a structured framework through which future investment can contribute towards RMBC's wider climate change and carbon reduction ambitions whilst ensuring school buildings remain safe, warm, dry, compliant and operational
Emissions from transport?	Increase	There will be an increase in emissions associated with travel as part of the completion of the condition surveys and in			Captured through existing measures.

		future as part of any delivery.			
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Unknown	Some waste may be produced as part of the delivery of any works though it is not yet known how much until a forward plan of works is gathered.			
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Unknown	While future investment decisions will be subject to separate approval, the LTMP has the potential to support longer-term reductions in carbon emissions through innovation and design of buildings		The proposal itself has limited carbon impact in the short term as it primarily relates to strategic planning, data collection and asset management activities relating to final designs and end user needs.	
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				

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

The primary purpose of the LTMP remains the management of condition, compliance and operational risks.
Some future investment decisions may be driven by statutory compliance, safety or asset failure considerations where carbon reduction opportunities are limited by:

- Available capital funding.
- Building constraints.
- Heritage or planning considerations.
- Operational requirements of schools.
- Affordability and value for money considerations.

The overall impact on emissions of the LTMP cannot be fully described until the initial surveys and planning is complete and funding for delivery is confirmed.

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

This decision will not directly impact upon the resilience of the council to climate change though the longer-term delivery of the plan, with an aim to create better, more efficient buildings will improve the resilience of these sites to climate impacts. This work also presents an opportunity to consider cooling alongside the projects' 'warm and dry' remit to account for climate impacts during prologued periods of excess heat which has been demonstrated to impact on the delivery of education and learning.

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

This decision will improve the evidence base associated with the Council's maintained schools and provide investment opportunities which could result in lower carbon operation of school buildings. However, in the short term, the primary emissions associated with the decision relate to the emissions released via travel whilst undertaking surveys at the various sites.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Kevin Miller HOS FM & Compliance Property and Facilities Services Corporate Services
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	*Not applicable*
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	*Not applicable*
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA 707 Louise Preston Climate Change Manager

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure – Service Level Agreements (2027-2030)

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

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report
Jane Maxwell, Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement

Report Author(s)
Waheed Akhtar
Communities Manager
Policy, Strategy and Engagement Directorate
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Elena Cooke
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Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report makes recommendations for the grant funding of two separate three-year service level agreements (SLAs) for the period April 2027 to March 2030. These are for the provision of the following services:

1) Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure services – held by Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) – providing support to voluntary and community groups including organisational development, governance, funding, recruiting volunteers and training.

2) Advice services – held by Citizens Advice Rotherham and District (CARD) – providing advice including welfare benefits, debt, immigration and general advice.

At the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2023, Cabinet gave approval to award two three year service level agreements (SLAs) running from April 2024 to March 2027 to these same organisations. Following a co-design process over the summer, the two new proposed SLAs for the next three years (April 2027 until March 2030) will progress the commitments set out in the Rotherham Compact, an agreement between public sector organisations who are members of the Rotherham Together Partnership and voluntary and community organisations in Rotherham. They will build on experience gained through the current SLAs, taking account of local and national research, and set out a strategic approach for the future of these services in Rotherham.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1) Agree to progress the arrangements for VCS Infrastructure Services in Rotherham, including:
    a) The proposed model being delivered through a standard SLA for three years commencing from 1 April 2027 and continuing to 31 March 2030, which is based on the findings of a co-design exercise.
    b) Funding of £573,000 being awarded as a grant to Voluntary Action Rotherham, in annual payments of £191,000, to deliver the three-year SLA.

2) Agree to progress the arrangements for Advice Services in Rotherham, including:
    a) The proposed model being delivered through a standard SLA for three years commencing from 1 April 2027 and continuing to 31 March 2030, which is based on the findings of a co-design exercise.
    b) Funding of £999,000 being awarded as a grant to Citizens Advice Rotherham and District, in annual payments of £333,000, to deliver the three-year SLA.
    c) Utilising £93,000 of funding per annum previously allocated for pension credit advice as part of the 2025/26 Council Budget process to fund the increase to the Advice Services SLA.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Case Study: Voluntary Action Rotherham
Appendix 2 Case Study: Citizens Advice Rotherham and District
Appendix 3 Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Cabinet Report 20.11.2023 Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Service Level Agreements 2024-2027
Rotherham Compact www.varotherham.org.uk

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

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure – Service Level Agreements (2027-2030)

1. Background

1.1 At its meeting of 20 November 2023, Cabinet gave approval to award two three-year service level agreements (SLAs) running from April 2024 to March 2027. One SLA was for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Services, which was awarded to Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) at £126,000 per annum. The second SLA was for Advice Services, which was awarded to Citizens Advice Rotherham and District (CARD) at £240,000 per annum.

1.2 The current infrastructure services SLA provides the following support to voluntary and community groups:

- Writing a constitution
- Managing meetings
- Registering as a charity
- Developing financial processes
- Applying for funding
- Managing staff and volunteers
- Having good governance arrangements and business planning

1.3 The current advice services SLA provides the following support to advice services:

- Welfare benefits
- Debt
- Immigration
- General advice

1.4 Both of the current three-year SLAs expire on 31 March 2027. This report makes recommendations for SLAs to cover the next three-year period from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2030. It takes into consideration the results of the co-design processes undertaken in July and August 2026, in accordance with the Rotherham Compact. The co-designs build on experience gained through delivery of the current SLAs, taking account of local and national research, and set out a strategic approach for the VCS and for advice services in Rotherham.

1.5 The base budgets for the two SLAs have been unchanged since the current models were established in 2014, although there have been additional service expectations. During this period, costs have increased (food, fuel, staff, national insurance, general overheads) but the level of service delivery has had to be maintained. In general, demand for services has been increasing, reflecting significant rises in living costs, which typically have a greater impact on those with low incomes.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Current VCS Infrastructure SLA

Through the current service level agreement, infrastructure services provide support to VCS organisations across the borough to become more effective and sustainable. This support incorporates information, advice, training facilities and help with networking, partnerships, advocacy and campaigning. It also includes specific support for volunteering, supporting people to set up voluntary and community organisations or social enterprises, as well as bringing VCS groups/organisations together in networks and forums to inform and influence strategic planning.

2.2 VAR is delivering four key strands of VCS infrastructure support:

- Group Support – develop community groups through a whole journey approach, from starting up to delivering large government contracts.
- Volunteering – working with voluntary organisations and partners to provide support to their volunteers, and a nationally accredited Volunteer Centre that enables people to become active in their communities.
- Communications and Engagement – to strategically represent the VCS, providing information and opportunity to the sector, developing groups to respond to need and take up those opportunities.
- Partnership working – work in partnership across the sector, aligned with stakeholder plans, developing local solutions and being the trusted voice of over 900 voluntary and community groups who are members.

2.3 Current Advice Services SLA

The overall demand for advice service provision in Rotherham remains at a high level. The number of clients supported has increased by 23% since 2023/24. The table below shows CARD's total number of clients, funded through a number of sources including Rotherham Council grant funding over the SLA period.

Table 1 – Total CARD Clients 2023/24 to 2025/26

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Telephone (outbound)	7,639	7,850	9,894
In Person	1,787	4,335	5,339
Email	3,227	3,816	4,893
Adviceline Phone (Inbound)	5,300	3,215	1,585
Other	112	627	1,003
Letter	83	302	393
Webchat	548	610	119
Videocall	208	53	11

Total	**18,904**	**20,808**	**23,237**

2.4 Advice services continue to be delivered under the four-level model previously adopted:

- Level 1 – signposting and self-service, including referrals from other service providers
- Level 2 – Triage, advice trained form filling, low level knowledge-based general advice
- Level 3 – High level knowledge-based advice and case work
- Level 4 – Advocacy and specialist appeals

2.5 Level 2 and 3 services are delivered through CARD, the Council and the voluntary sector providing a range of services mainly focussed on:

- Debt
- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Consumer Rights
- Immigration
- Welfare
- Family
- Legal

Level 4 is provided by the Council's Advocacy and Appeals Services and CARD.

2.6 <u>Rotherham Compact</u>
The Rotherham Compact is an agreement between public sector organisations who are members of the Rotherham Together Partnership and voluntary and community organisations in Rotherham. It sets out commitments on both sides to improve the way in which public organisations and the VCS work together for the benefit of communities and citizens.

2.7 In its work with the VCS, the Council has committed to follow the processes and procedures agreed through the Rotherham Compact which states:

> *"An underlying principle of effective commissioning for outcomes should be the commitment to embed genuine co-production into all commissioning activity. People's energy, skills, interests, knowledge and life experiences should be harnessed to influence the support and services they receive. This includes active participation alongside commissioners of services in the shaping of, and design of new service delivery models. Co-production gives a collective sense of ownership and can connect residents to the statutory organisations and voluntary and community organisations with a common purpose."*

Co-design Process

2.8 As the current SLAs are due to expire on 31st March 2027, invitations to bid were advertised on the Council website, for a suitable organisation to become the lead co-design partner to work alongside Rotherham Council, for the new three-year SLAs (1 April 2027 to 31 March 2030), in accordance with the Rotherham Compact.

2.9 As a result of the assessment process, VAR was again appointed as the lead organisation for the VCS infrastructure services co-design and CARD was again appointed as the lead organisation for the advice services co-design. The outcomes of the eight-week co-design processes provide the detail for agreement of standard three-year service level agreements with VAR and CARD for the respective future service provision.

2.10 The Council recognises the important strategic role that both delivery partners (VAR and CARD) have within their respective sectors, and the value of their strong working partnership with the Council. Both organisations are well-managed, have good governance arrangements, are organisationally stable and have a good quality of service delivery.

2.11 Both stakeholder and client consultation has taken place as part of the co-design process. VAR consulted with VCS member organisations and did an online survey. Meanwhile, CARD consulted with their advice partners and also undertook a survey. The feedback through the co-design demonstrates that the services are highly regarded by their client groups.

2.12 VCS Infrastructure Co-design

Current budget: £126,000 per annum; £378,000 over the three year SLA. This provides a 'hub and core' support model comprising of:

- Delivering a dynamic programme to enable a vibrant VCS as a catalyst for sustainable and resilient community activity, including engagement at the Rotherham level as well as sub-regionally and nationally.
- Partnership working across agencies in Rotherham, contributing to strategic direction for the borough and engaging the VCS in delivering outcomes aligned to shared borough priorities.
- Building social capital and social value, strengthening community assets in neighbourhoods, linking with the roles of Elected Members, Neighbourhoods officers and VCS activity at the local level.
- Promoting equalities and community cohesion, particularly with marginalised or socially excluded communities. This includes the approach to supporting tackling inequalities and deprivation, linking to and supporting advice and crisis support services.
- Strengthening financial resilience in the sector, with support for external funding bids and good governance.
- Championing the "Rotherham Compact" and facilitating reviews to ensure alignment with national best practice.
- Supporting the role of volunteers, including skills development, effective management, brokerage of volunteers in VCS activity and volunteering opportunities in public services.

2.13 **Proposed budget:** £191,000 per annum; £573,000 over the three year SLA. In the next proposed three-year SLA, VAR will continue to deliver the hub and core model. An increase in funding would enable VAR to deliver additional new and emerging priority activity areas including:

- Attracting and brokering Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships, investment and resources for Rotherham front line VCS groups and organisations
- Increasing work on Social Value, including brokering and supporting social value offers, investment, resources and expertise for the benefit of the VCS and the Rotherham communities they serve.
- To develop and strengthen the 'Community Cohesion' offer, practice and opportunities with Rotherham VCS and stakeholders
- Flex capacity to respond to other new and emerging Rotherham priorities, which encompass VCS and/or wider stakeholders

2.14 An increase in the SLA budget would enable VAR to do more of this type of work, at pace, as well as enhancing organisational sustainability. A case study exemplifying VAR's work is attached as Appendix 1.

2.15 <u>Advice Services Co-Design</u>
Current budget: £240,000 per annum; £720,000 over the three year SLA. This funds CARD's essential central hub operations, enabling clients to access CARD services at a central location and ensuring effective back-office support for outreach locations across the borough.

2.16 **Proposed budget:** £333,000 per annum; £999,000 for the three year SLA. In the next proposed three-year SLA, CARD will continue its shift to more face-to-face venues including the Town Centre Hub office as their first point of contact, as well as outreach locations across the borough. An increase in funding would create additional specialist capacity at the central hub and strengthen support for residents with more complex advice needs. The exact nature of the additional specialist support will be agreed through the annual delivery plan for the SLA, but is expected to comprise elements of the following activity:

- Welfare benefit appeals – greater senior caseworker capacity to provide more consistent support for local residents through Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), and Universal Credit Mandatory Reconsiderations.
- Form-filling – dedicated advisor time to help residents complete key forms, including PIP, Pension Credit, and Universal Credit applications.
- Housing and complex debt prevention – specialist advice for households facing eviction, significant rent arrears, or escalating Council Tax enforcement, helping to reduce the risk of further financial or housing pressures.
- Improved outreach escalation – advisors delivering services across the outreach network would have clearer referral routes into hub specialists, helping vulnerable community clients access support more quickly where capacity allows.

- Out of hours services – provide additional advice provision options in evenings and weekends to support people in employment who are unable to access traditional services.

2.17 The additional funding would go directly into specialist frontline capacity, reduce reliance on general waiting lists, and strengthen early intervention across welfare benefits, debt, immigration, housing, and form filling support. This will prevent issues escalating into homelessness, lost household income, or costly enforcement activity. It will also seek to ensure that support is available to communities across the borough. A case study exemplifying CARD's work is attached as Appendix 2.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 **Option one** would be to do nothing. This would result in withdrawal of support for VCS Infrastructure and for Advice Services from the end of the current SLAs (31 March 2027). A do-nothing option would not be aligned to the Council's vision for Rotherham where "we value decency and dignity and seek to build a town where opportunity is extended to everyone, where people can grow, flourish and prosper, and where no one is left behind". A do-nothing option would also not be aligned to the strategic priorities under the 'Enabling strong and proud communities' theme in the Rotherham Plan, making sure services are easy to access and shaped around local needs.

3.2 **Advice**: Whilst some advice provision would remain in the VCS, the capacity would fall far short of that required to meet demand. The Council's in-house services would not have the capacity to fill the gap. The withdrawal of support for some of the most vulnerable people, who rely on advice services, would have significant equalities implications and run counter to the policy priorities set out in the Council Plan.

3.3 **Infrastructure**: Whilst there is no statutory requirement to support infrastructure services in the VCS, this support strengthens the sustainability and resilience of voluntary and community groups in the borough, which are working with a diverse range of communities and issues. Therefore, **a do-nothing option is not recommended.**

3.4 **Option two** would be to re-commission both VAR and CARD at their current grant funding levels (£126,000 per annum for VAR and £240,000 per annum for CARD) for three years.

3.5 Whilst the base budgets for the two SLAs have remained unchanged for over a decade, the level of service delivery has been maintained. However, given the current financial constraints for both delivery partners linked to inflation and increasing demand on services, the current level of service delivery is not sustainable. Therefore, **option two is not recommended.**

3.6 **Option three** would be to re-commission both VAR and CARD and include the proposed increased funding amount for both organisations (£191,000 per annum for VAR and £333,000 per annum for CARD) for three years, to reflect increased costs, sustained high levels of demand for services, proposed

additional capacity and enhanced delivery models outlined in paragraphs 2.13 to 2.17.

3.7 This option would acknowledge the fact that costs (such as fuel, staff, national insurance, general overheads), have increased and that continuing to deliver at the current level without additional grant funding is not sustainable. The base budgets for the two SLAs have been unchanged since the current models were established in 2014, but there have been additional service expectations.

3.8 In general, demand for advice services and VCS support services has been increasing, reflecting significant rises in living costs, which typically have a greater impact on those with low incomes. The proposed additional funding would reflect the increased costs and would lead to enhanced service provision across the borough. A further report is due to be considered by Cabinet in December regarding Crisis and Resilience provision, which will also include neighbourhoods based support.

3.9 In the meeting on 5 March 2025, Council approved core funding of £93,000 for additional temporary Pension Credit Advice, as part of a broader package of support for residents with the cost of living. This service has been delivered by Age UK (£55,000 per annum) and CARD (£38,000 per annum) for 2025/26 and 2026/27, with the respective service level agreements concluding on 31 March 2027. Given the context of the changes to the winter fuel allowance, cost of living pressures and increased demand for CARD general advice services, it is proposed that this funding is re-purposed into broader support for residents from 1 April 2027. The budget of £93,000 would be added to the £240,000 budget currently available for CARD to enable the new SLA to be funded at £333,000 per annum for three years. This will enable a wider range of residents to benefit from advice services, including Pension Credit form filling.

3.10 **Option three is the recommended option** and is summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of recommended option for the VCS infrastructure and advice services SLA

Service level agreement	Brief description of service provided	Current allocation per annum (April 2024 – March 2027)	Recommended allocation per annum in option 3 (April 2027 – March 2030)
VCS infrastructure services SLA	Provides the following support to voluntary and community groups across the borough: writing a constitution; managing meetings; registering as a charity; developing financial processes;	£126,000	£191,000

	applying for funding; managing staff and volunteers; and having good governance arrangements and business planning.		
Advice services SLA	Provides the following advice services: welfare benefits; debt; immigration; and general advice.	£240,000	£333,000

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Both stakeholder and client consultation has taken place as part of the co-design process. VAR consulted with VCS member organisations and did an online survey. Meanwhile, CARD consulted with their advice partners and also undertook a survey.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 All processes need to be completed in time for commencement of the new SLA delivery on 1 April 2027.

5.2 Subject to Cabinet approval, a detailed delivery plan will be produced in December and January with VAR and CARD. This will include further equality analysis and first year delivery targets being agreed. The new SLA paperwork will need to be produced and signed off by mid-March in time for delivery to commence from 1 April 2027.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report as the arrangements relate to grant agreements that fall outside the scope of procurement legislation.

6.2 The proposed additional costs across both services are £158k per annum, with a total additional cost across the three year contracts of £474k. These additional costs will be met through a reallocation of a £93k budget investment in 2025/26 towards an extension of Pension Credit Advisors, £279k across the 3 years. The remaining amount of £65k per year, £195k across the 3 years will be met from the Council's inflationary budgets held for major contract inflation.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Council has power to provide financial assistance to voluntary and community sector organisations pursuant to section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (the General Power of Competence). In addition, the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 provides a power for local authorities to provide financial and other assistance to certain voluntary organisations whose

activities include the provision, promotion or support of services of a welfare, health or advisory nature. The proposals contained within this report support the Council's strategic priorities relating to community resilience, social inclusion and access to advice services.

7.2 Appropriate grant agreements should be completed with the relevant parties setting out the conditions of funding, monitoring requirements, performance expectations, audit rights, compliance with subsidy control requirements and arrangements for termination.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct workforce implications for RMBC employees. The proposals relate to grant-funded service delivery by external organisations and no TUPE implications have been identified for the Council at this stage.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Infrastructure SLA is not service specific but encompasses support for the VCS across all areas of activity. This includes VCS organisations that provide services and support for children and young people.

9.2 Many of the users of advice services will be from families with children and vulnerable adults, some with disabilities and/or financial exclusion issues. Continuation of advice services is important to safeguarding and is consistent with being a child friendly borough.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equality forms part of the shared principles of the Rotherham Compact that will drive the co-design of future VCS Services. These are:

- Respect: public and VCS organisations are accountable in different ways, but both need to be open and honest. Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the differences between partners of the Compact.
- Honesty: It is only through open communication that strong partnerships can be built and maintained. Full and frank discussions should be the basis for resolving difficulties.
- Independence: The independence of the VCS is recognised and supported. This includes the right for voluntary and community organisations to campaign, to comment on and to challenge policy such as a ‘critical friend’ (whatever funding or other relationship may exist) and to determine and manage their own affairs.
- Diversity: The public sector and the VCS value a thriving civil society, which allows different groups to have a voice and bring forward new ideas.
- Equality: Fairness for everyone, regardless of their background, is a fundamental goal, and public sector and the VCS will work together to achieve this.

- Citizen empowerment: By working together, the public sector and the VCS can help to improve conditions for communities and people, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.
- Volunteering: The energy and commitment of people giving their time for the public good contributes to a vibrant society and should be recognised and appreciated.

10.2 The Rotherham Compact contains a section on equality. It states that

"Equality for everyone, regardless of their background, is a core value shared by the public sector and the VCS. Over the last four decades, discrimination legislation and related policy have played an important role in helping to make Britain a more equal society. As both society itself and equality legislation continue to evolve, it is crucial that the public sector and the VCS work well together to achieve equality and fairness for everyone."

10.3 An Equalities Screening (Form A) has been completed alongside this report. It recognises the requirement to address equalities as part of the co-design for the service provision going forward. Infrastructure services are at the core of support for the diversity of the VCS. This, along with the equalities data from current advice service provision, will be the starting point for the Equality Analysis. Advice services are response driven, meeting demand for support, often by the most vulnerable people in society. Much of the advice demand, especially around benefits, debt and immigration are accessed by people with protected characteristics. In addition, many of VAR's members, particularly small groups, are delivering support to people with protected characteristics. There are also some larger voluntary groups working on equalities but feedback from the sector shows that there is potential for more groups to include equalities considerations as part of their service delivery. In the light of this, an Equalities Analysis (Form B) will be completed as part of the continued co-design process in December 2026 and January 2027.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 For Advice Services there are no implications for CO2 Emissions or Climate Change.

11.2 For Infrastructure Services there are likely to be positive implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change, as VAR is supporting organisations that are working towards the net zero agenda for the borough.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The VCS are key strategic partners in the Rotherham Together Partnership. The recommendations of this report would reinforce the strategic role of the VCS in Rotherham, adding value to partnership working.

12.2 The Council works in partnership with VCS advice providers through the Advice in Rotherham (AIR) Partnership.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There is the risk that the co-production collaborative approach fails through disagreement between the parties. In these circumstances, should the processes set out in the Compact not produce a resolution, the Council would need to instigate other arrangements to secure continuity of service delivery.

14. Accountable Officers

Fiona Boden, Head of Policy, Performance & Intelligence

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	28/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	26/10/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	27/10/26

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This report is published on the Council's website.

Case Study: Voluntary Action Rotherham - Support to Rotherham Families First

Supporting a community vision to grow and thrive

For more than three decades, Ann Levick has been committed to helping children and families across Rotherham who are facing hardship. What began in 1991 as a local Christmas Toy Appeal has grown into Rotherham Families First, an award-winning charity that now supports thousands of people across the Rotherham borough every year.

She was determined that vulnerable children and families should not lose a vital source of support. With guidance and assistance from Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), she established Families First in 2017, creating a formal structure that would allow the initiative to continue, develop and reach more people in need.







Helping a small community project build strong foundations

As the organisation began to grow, VAR provided support to help turn a passionate community project in to a sustainable organisation. Through VAR's guidance, advice and access to specialist support, Families First was able to strengthen its governance, develop its organisational capacity and build confidence for the future.

This support helped the organisation evolve from a volunteer-led community initiative into the registered charity now known as Rotherham Families First, achieving charitable status in May 2024.

> *"I couldn't have done what I have done without the support of VAR and the wonderful people that work there. Rotherham Families First would not be able to help thousands of Rotherham families if it was not for the support I had from VAR in the first instance and over the years. They always give good advice, look for answers if not to hand. They are my go-to people."*
>
> Ann Levick, Rotherham Families First

Delivering a vital support service across Rotherham

Today, Rotherham Families First provides practical support to families experiencing poverty, hardship and crisis. Working through anonymous referrals from professionals such as teachers, social workers and health visitors, the charity distributes essential items including clothing, bedding, baby equipment, household

goods, toiletries, toys and school supplies. Its unique anonymous referral system ensures support is delivered with dignity, preserving the privacy and self-respect of the families it serves.

Families First also continues to coordinate Rotherham's annual Christmas Toy Appeal, bringing festive joy to more than 2,000 children and young people each year.

Recognition for outstanding community impact

The growth and success of Rotherham Families First has been recognised through several awards in recent years. These include VAR's Community Project Achievement Award in 2021, the EFL Community Hero Award in 2025 and, most notably, the King's Award for Voluntary Service in 2024 (below), widely regarded as the equivalent of an MBE for voluntary organisations.



The difference Voluntary Action Rotherham has made

The success of Rotherham Families First highlights the impact that effective voluntary sector support can have on local organisations. By providing guidance, encouragement and a supportive environment in which the organisation could develop, VAR helped ensure that a valued community initiative not only survived but flourished.

Today, what started as a small local project has become an award-winning charity supporting families across the borough every week. Its continued success stands as a testament to the dedication of its volunteers, the generosity of local communities and the importance of having strong voluntary sector infrastructure support in place to help organisations achieve their potential.

> *"We now have over 20 volunteers who give their time each week and work tirelessly for Rotherham families. We are taking anonymous referrals from professionals that know them. We have at least 4 neurodivergent volunteers, who come on a weekly basis. One has grown such a great deal that he now gives eye contact, can hold a conversation and has now found a job with a contract – we are very proud!"*

Appendix 1 – Case Study: Voluntary Action Rotherham



Timeline of Rotherham Families First including the support VAR has provided over the years

- Provided resources to run the Christmas Toy Appeal including laptop, email address, stationary, stamps etc (2017).
- Advice re: insurance, volunteer expenses, setting up a bank account and becoming a constituted group (2019).
- Won the Best Project Community Achievement Award (2021).
- With VAR's support became a registered charity (2024).
- Received the King's Award for Voluntary Service (2024).
- EFL Community Hero Award in 2025 (2025).
- Provided funding support through bespoke funding searches through Grant Finder.
- Registering with VAR to recruit volunteers – VAR brokered numerous volunteer opportunities with Rotherham Families First.
- Ongoing volunteer management support including DBS checks and trustees.

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Citizens Advice Rotherham
2 Upper Millgate
Rotherham
S60 1PF
Tel: 01709 515680
www.citizensadvicerotherham.org.uk

IAA registration number N201100037

Background

The client first spoke to Citizens Advice while attending Rotherham Foodbank because they were struggling financially and needed emergency food. The client lived in rented shared accommodation and had been unable to work because of an ongoing health condition. Their health had affected their ability to continue in their previous employment and they had used up the savings they previously had. They were receiving Universal Credit, including the Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity element, but were still struggling to meet their essential living costs.

The Issue

The client's immediate need was food. They were struggling financially and did not have enough money to manage until their next benefit payment, so a food parcel was arranged. During the conversation, the adviser identified that there were wider issues contributing to the client's financial situation. The client had previously applied for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) but had been unsuccessful. Their health continued to have a significant impact on their daily life and they wanted to explore making a new claim. The client was also unsure whether they were receiving the correct benefits and needed support to understand their entitlement.

Support Provided

Following the initial foodbank contact, an appointment was arranged with a Citizens Advice adviser to look at the client's benefits in more detail. A benefit check was completed and the client was given information about their Universal Credit, potential entitlement to New Style Employment and Support Allowance and making a new claim for PIP. The adviser explained that once the client received their PIP form, they could return to Citizens Advice for help completing it. After receiving the form, they returned to the foodbank and an appointment was arranged. Although the client initially missed the appointment, they later came back to the foodbank and asked for it to be rearranged.

The adviser continued working with the client and spent a further appointment completing the PIP form with them. The adviser acted as a pen while the client explained how their conditions affected them, helped organise the information required and printed supporting medical evidence to accompany the application. Throughout this period, the client continued to experience financial hardship and required further emergency food support while waiting for a decision on their PIP application. When the client later contacted the adviser about an

unrelated debt issue, they were referred directly to CARD's specialist Debt Team for further support.

Outcomes
What began as a request for emergency food developed into several months of ongoing advice and support.

The client's immediate need for food was addressed, while the foodbank setting also provided an opportunity to identify and explore the wider circumstances contributing to their financial difficulties. The client received a full benefit check and was supported to make a new PIP claim. Most importantly, when the PIP form arrived, they knew that they could return to Citizens Advice for help rather than having to complete it alone. The completed PIP application was submitted to the DWP with supporting medical evidence and the client is currently awaiting a decision.

The client has continued to return for support when new issues have arisen. Most recently, when they received a bill they did not understand because they had previously entered into a Debt Relief Order, they contacted the adviser directly and were referred to CARD's specialist Debt Team.

The case demonstrates the wider value of providing advice alongside foodbank support. An initial conversation about emergency food developed into an ongoing relationship with Citizens Advice, allowing the client to access support with benefits, financial hardship and debt as their circumstances developed.

Adviser Reflection
This client has been so engaged with the service and has worked really hard to improve their situation. They have always been really grateful for the help and support we have given them.

I have developed a wonderful relationship with this client, where they now feel completely comfortable coming to see me and talking openly about things that they may find embarrassing or difficult to discuss. It has been really rewarding to build that level of trust and to know that they feel able to come back to us when they need support.

Appendix 3:
Initial Equality Screening Assessment PART A

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

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

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

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

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

1. Title	
Title: Service Level Agreements (2027-2030) for Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure	
Directorate: Policy, Strategy and Engagement	**Service area: Policy, Performance and Intelligence**
Lead person: Waheed Akhtar	**Contact: waheed.akhtar@rotherham.gov.uk**
Is this a: [ ] **Strategy / Policy** [X] **Service / Function** [ ] **Other** **If other, please specify**	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
The Cabinet report makes recommendations for the three-year Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Advice Services SLA, for the period 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2030, including the results of the co-design processes undertaken in July and August 2026.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

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

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

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

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?	X	
Could the proposal affect service users?	X	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	X	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		X
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	X	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		X

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

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6.**
If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4.**

Considering the impact on equality and diversity

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

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

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

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

Infrastructure services are at the core of support for the diversity of the VCS. This, along with the equalities data from current advice service provision, will be the starting point for the Equality Analysis. Equalities planning and Equality Analysis have already been an integral component of the co-design of services in accordance with the Rotherham Compact, which in turn has specific commitments around equalities.

- **Key findings**

Advice services are response driven, meeting demand for support, often by the most vulnerable people in society. Much of the advice demand, especially around benefits, debt and immigration are accessed by people with protected characteristics. Planning of the service has full regard to the needs of protected groups.

VCS Infrastructure Services are one of the key drivers for equalities in the VCS and communities, championing the provisions of the Rotherham Compact. Specifically, the Rotherham Compact states:

An important way in which the VCS can promote equality effectively is by working with public sector organisations on equality issues. VCS organisations undertake to:

- *Take practical action in partnership with the public sector to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build community links.*
- *Show committed leadership (especially at senior levels) to promote equality and, where necessary, put strategies in place to achieve it.*

Many of VAR's members, particularly small groups, are delivering excellent support to people with protected characteristics. There are also some larger charities working on equalities, but more is needed. There is an intersectional aspect to the work of many VCS groups as they are working with people with several protected characteristics. For example, a group may be working with BAME disabled women, or perhaps with older men from different faiths on issues of isolation/loneliness.

- **Actions**

There will be further consideration of equality outcomes following Cabinet approval in November, when the detailed delivery plan and the Equalities Analysis Form B will be finalised as part of the Service Level Agreement in January 2027.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	December 2026
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	January 2027
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Waheed Akhtar, Communities Manager

5. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:		
Name	**Job title**	**Date**
Jane Maxwell	Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement	22/10/26

6. Publishing	
This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report. A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
Date screening completed	08/10/2026
Report title and date	Service Level Agreements (2027-2030) for Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	Cabinet Report for 16 November 2026 Cabinet Meeting
Date screening sent to Policy, Performance and Intelligence equality@rotherham.gov.uk	09/10/2026

Will the decision/proposal impact…	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified:			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across the Borough as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	None	Emissions from energy use in the fulfilment of advice and VCS infrastructure SLAs are considered the Council's scope 3 emissions under contract. Notwithstanding a proposed funding uplift, no change is proposed in the level of service, so no carbon impact is expected from the decision to re-commission these services.			
Emissions from transport?	None	As above, any emissions from fuel use for transport in the fulfilment of these SLAs are considered the Council's scope 3 emissions under contract, but no change is expected as a result of the recommended decision and hence, no carbon impact.			

Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				

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

Digital services and online resources may have a hidden carbon impact, from the energy use required for servers and data centres.

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

Debt, housing, employment, education, consumer, immigration, welfare, family and legal advice services are provided for some of the borough's most vulnerable people, under the Council's SLA. Without sustainable funding for these services, people's resilience and adaptive capacity may be negatively affected, increasing their vulnerability to effects of climate change, such as increased risk of flooding and extreme heatwaves. Similarly, voluntary and community sector infrastructure services strengthen the sustainability and resilience of voluntary and community groups in the borough, which are working with a diverse range of communities and issues.

Provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:
This report relates to continued service delivery of existing provision through recommissioning process, as such emissions are likely to remain largely the same. For Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Services there are likely to be positive implications for CO_2 Emissions and Climate Change, as Voluntary Action Rotherham is supporting organisations that are working towards the net zero agenda for the borough.

Supporting information:	
Climate Impact Assessment Author	Waheed Akhtar Communities Manager Policy, Performance and Intelligence Policy, Strategy and Engagement
Please outline any research, data or information used to complete this Climate Impact Assessment.	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Validation	Tracking Reference: CIA 703 Arthur King Principal Climate Change Officer

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Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Improving Places Select Commission Scrutiny Review – School Road Safety

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
Jane Maxwell, Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement

Report Author(s)
Kristianne Thorogood, Governance Advisor
01709 254916 or kristianne.thorogood@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary
This report summarises the findings and recommendations of the Improving Places Select Commission scrutiny review in respect of school road safety across the borough of Rotherham.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet receives the recommendations listed below, as approved by the Improving Places Select Commission and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board;

   a) **Improved Cross-Directorate Working**

      i) Develop a cross-directorate map of roles and responsibilities (e.g. highways, school engagement, enforcement, crossing patrol) to establish and embed stronger partnership working across Council services, including improvements to internal reporting and decision-making systems and processes aligned across directorates.

      ii) Consider the feasibility of establishing a cross-directorate working group (that meets regularly, with clear terms of reference and a governance structure) to oversee school road safety in Rotherham. The aim of this working group would be to drive and coordinate delivery and provide increased accountability and visibility.

iii) Any established school road safety working group should be launched as the front-facing, main point of contact for collaboration with residents, schools, Councillors, and partners related to school road safety, to ensure the Council's commitment to school road safety is both visible and accessible. Consider the creation of a dedicated section of the Council website on school road safety to support this.

iv) Work together with ward Councillors to progress the development of ward-specific road safety plans, each to contain a section on road safety issues around local schools. These plans would inform each ward's CAP development plans.

v) In the spirit of the new Neighbourhood Leadership Strategy, council services should endeavour to keep Councillors regularly informed on any new plans relating to transport and school road safety and/or works due to be carried out within their wards at the earliest possible opportunity.

b) **Data, Monitoring and Strategic Alignment**

i) Take steps to improve baseline data collection around schools (e.g traffic, parking, reported incidents, travel behaviours). Establishment of centralised, cross-directorate incident reporting and escalation processes would help to identify areas of concern and need, which in turn, would inform the prioritisation of potential projects and pilot school locations.

ii) Develop a coordinated, borough-wide School Road Safety Strategy, to be aligned with SYMCA's regional action plans and travel strategies – such as the new South Yorkshire Transport Strategy and the Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Strategy.

iii) Explore what regional support may be available via the Safer Roads Partnership and the Active Lives & Safer Roads teams at SYMCA, for example, access to shared data mapping tools/systems and funding opportunities.

iv) Consider the coordination of projects with neighbouring local authorities via SYMCA, which would provide opportunities for enhanced economies of scale.

c) **Funding Development**

i) Establish a defined and protected allocation for school road safety projects within wider capital transport funding to ensure longer-term funding streams that can support the shift to a more proactive and coordinated approach.

ii) Use the recommended enhanced data collection models to strengthen the evidence base to support future funding bids. Develop a clear pipeline of projects to maximise use of Transport for City Regions and Integrated Settlement Active Travel funding via SYMCA to support school road safety.

iii) Work with SYMCA to explore how Rotherham could benefit from the government's new Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and the projected £4.5 billion of investment to be made available over the next 5 years.

iv) Develop a balanced programme of low-cost interventions (signage, markings, speed reduction measures) and targeted higher-cost schemes, using the suggested enhanced data collection models to provide evidence to inform and justify the prioritisation of certain schools and schemes.

v) Develop a funding stream to support opportunities for increased work with and support for schools across the borough (see d) School Engagement & Active Travel below).

vi) Strengthen existing work with the Planning team to ensure early identification of any potential section 106 developer funding for specific road safety improvements/schemes.

d) **School Engagement & Active Travel**

i) Urgently undertake a borough-wide survey of all schools to better understand their concerns and needs regarding school road safety.

ii) Using the results of the survey and enhanced data mapping models (alongside existing knowledge and data), identify a priority list of schools in the borough for targeted intervention (e.g. top 10/20/30).

iii) Give consideration to the provision of additional dedicated School Engagement Officers/Active Travel Officers to strengthen trust and engagement with school leaders and governors. Such officers would be able to support enhanced engagement activities, such as assemblies, parent consultation and the promotion of Active Travel initiatives. This in turn, would help to encourage overall behaviour change from both pedestrians, drivers, and other road users around schools.

iv) Consider the creation of a borough-wide "Junior Road Safety Officer Programme" to allow schools and their pupils to lead on initiatives appropriate to their school settings. This would engage and benefit pupils in taking ownership of schemes to support their schools.

v) Conduct a full exploration of the different Active Travel schemes that are available (e.g Mode Shift Stars) and identify which schools already have an Active Travel Plan in place. Schools need support in applying for accreditation to such schemes and in implementing them, which should form part of the role of any additional School Engagement/Active Travel Officers.

vi) Identify any schools which may be suitable for the establishment of a School Streets pilot scheme, bearing in mind the fact that any School Streets scheme would need to be supported by proven prior active travel initiatives, and an engaged and committed senior leadership team and parent community.

vii) Work towards coordinating any existing initiatives (e.g Bikeability) into a single, coherent offer, introducing more child-centred, “fun first” campaigns. Invite external experts and teams from SYMCA and neighbouring local authorities to share best practice and success stories.

e) **Enforcement & Crossing Patrol**

i) Establish better cross-directorate data-sharing systems (as per a) above), to ensure that data collected by the Crossing Patrol and Parking Enforcement teams regarding incidents/near-misses and offences are monitored and used to inform decisions on priority sites and projects.

ii) Consider opportunities for the pilot use of body-cameras by crossing patrollers, giving due regard to safeguarding and data protection concerns.

iii) Conduct a detailed feasibility review into wider camera enforcement rollout of redeployable/static ANPR cameras, including a cost-benefit analysis and identification of suitable pilot locations.

iv) Consider further investment in roaming CCTV vehicles to support compliance and enforcement for parking offences around schools. Capacity for enforcement is currently limited to one CCTV van for all 200+ schools in the borough. A lack of a regular presence leads to inconsistent and ineffective enforcement.

v) Explore the potential for increased engagement with South Yorkshire Police, including a possible joint approach to promoting local anti-parking campaigns and joint responses at problem locations.

vi) Monitor and review forthcoming government guidance on footway parking powers. Consider any opportunities to tie the local enforcement approach into any future RMBC Pavement Parking Policy.

2. That Cabinet formally considers its response to the above recommendations within two months of its receipt, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3. That in responding to these recommendations, it is requested that Cabinet’s response should identify the proposed actions, responsible officer(s), success measures and target completion dates for each recommendation.

List of Appendices Included
None

Background Papers
Council Meeting 29 November 2023 - Notice of Motion School Road Safety and Street Motion (Minute 64)
Council Meeting 14 January 2026 – Petition relating to a pedestrian crossing in Brampton Bierlow

Council Meeting 22 April 2026 – Petition Improved Road Safety and School Crossing - Thorpe Hesley Primary School
Department for Transport – Road Safety Strategy
Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3)
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority – Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy
Press Release (June 2026) - £4.5 billion central government Active Travel investment
Guidance Note on Setting up a School Streets Scheme
BBC News Article June 2026 - Ministers want 60% of children walking or cycling to school by 2035
Rotherham Advertiser article – Thorpe Hesley petition
Sheffield Star article – Deepcar St John's School to start "ticketing" inconsiderate drivers

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Improving Places Select Commission – 01 September 2026
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 07 October 2026

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Improving Places Select Commission Scrutiny Review – School Road Safety

1. Background

1.1 In November 2023, a Motion was brought to Full Council by Councillor Tinsley (Chair of the Review Group) asking the Council to take a number of steps to improve school road safety across the borough. In an agreed amendment to this Motion, Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) were asked to consider making recommendations in relation to the following suggested steps:

1) Enhance and improve the process and reporting of near miss incidents for Crossing Patrol Operatives. Provide body worn cameras to aid documenting and prosecuting non-compliance of stop signs.
2) Explore technologies that can aid in enforcing School Crossings (Zig Zag Lines) Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Analyse and put into action appropriate parking and road markings around school entrances to guarantee an unobstructed, safe view for pedestrians crossing.
3) Commit to work with schools and Ward Councillors within our Authority that would benefit from a school street and compile a list of schools where school street trials could be launched as soon as practically possible, once the Council has the relevant powers to enforce them, fast tracking where experimental Traffic Orders could be used.
4) Continue to work with all schools in the Rotherham Borough to develop accredited Travel Plans, which will include enforceable No Idling Zones and “school streets” schemes. Providing a Members’ session to inform Members of the support available to Schools.

1.2 After the Motion had been carried, a Review Group of IPSC Members was established, and a number of scoping meetings took place to agree the key lines of enquiry that the Review should consider. Some delays were experienced in getting the Review going due to personnel changes and the local elections in 2024, but in early 2025 the scope of the Review was agreed and a series of meetings and information gathering sessions began in October 2025, concluding in July 2026.

1.3 The issue of school road safety arguably encompasses a broad range of Council directorates and services. Members acknowledged that there were a number of wider issues that contribute to the pressures experienced with regard to school road safety, such as home to school transport, the issues of school placement and catchment areas and public health considerations relating to active travel. However, in order to keep this Review focused, it was agreed that these issues would fall outside of the scope of this Review.

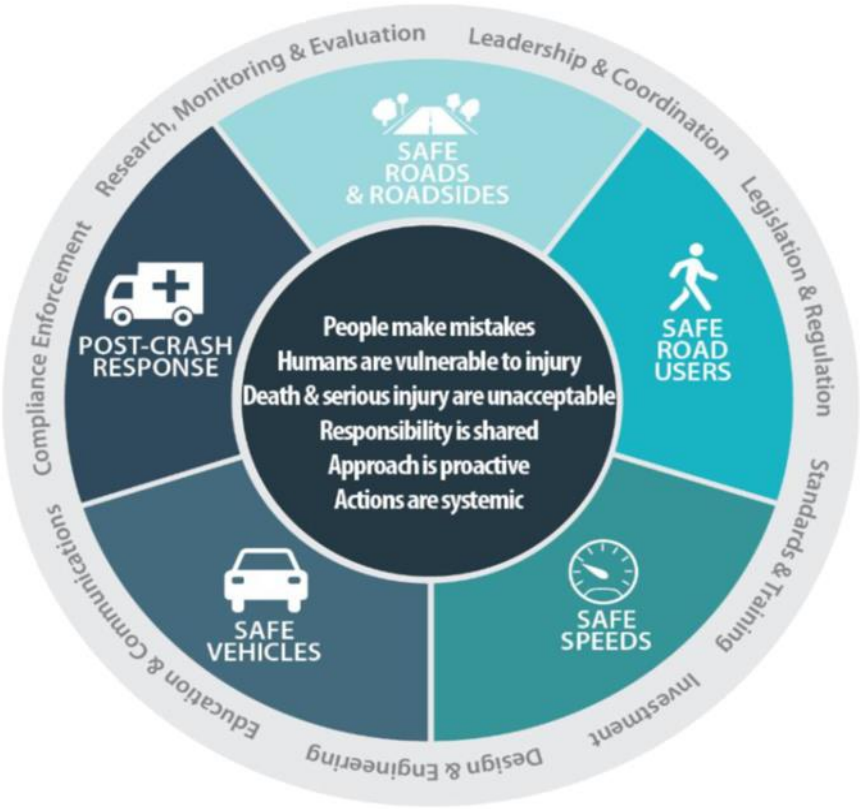
1.4 The issue of school road safety is currently both a national and regional priority. On 7 January 2026, the Government published the first National Road Safety Strategy in over a decade, which has set the ambitious targets of:

- aiming to cut road deaths and serious injuries by 65% by 2035; and
- a 70% reduction target in deaths and serious injuries for children under 16.

In June 2026, the government announced investment of £4.5 billion in active travel initiatives via Active Travel England.

1.5 From a regional perspective, to reflect this ambition, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) has committed to work towards a reduction of 20% in both targets by 2029. SYMCA is currently working on a new South Yorkshire Transport Strategy. This will support the "Vision Zero" strategy, which was launched in 2023 by the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership (SYSRP), with the aim to end all death and serious injury on South Yorkshire roads by 2050. The SYSRP promotes the "Safe System method" - a multi-agency, holistic approach that acknowledges that human error is inevitable and seeks to minimise the consequences through safer roads, safer speeds, safer vehicles, safer behaviours and effective post-collision responses.

1.6 The five pillars and eight enablers of the Safe System method (as depicted in the graphic below) are underpinned by targets and Safety Performance Indicators to create a framework for government leadership and local flexibility which prioritises safer travel.



1.7 SYMCA's Walking Wheeling and Cycling Strategy has already been launched with the aim to "*Make South Yorkshire the best place to walk,*

wheel and cycle". In launching the strategy, Mayor Coppard stated that "*young people in South Yorkshire deserve the best start in life, to feel safe and confident to move more. And parents deserve the peace of mind that their child can do that safely.*"

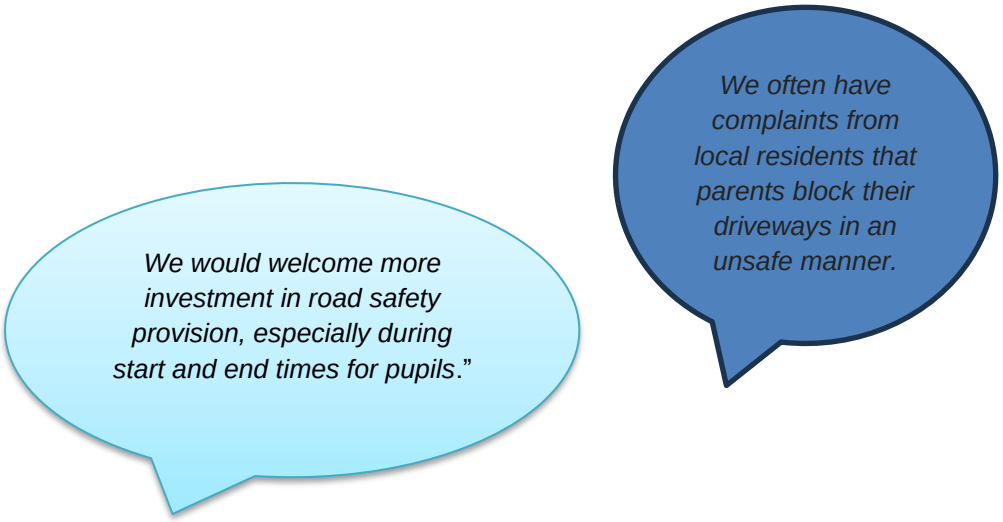
1.8 Road casualty statistics are released every September by the Department for Transport and data therefore lags by a year. The current data available for 2024 for Rotherham is as follows:

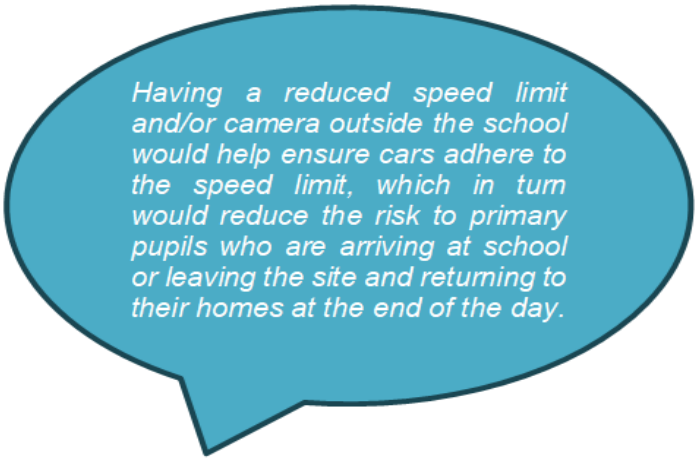
2024 data	Rotherham numbers
Fatal	6
Serious Injury	149
Total killed or seriously injured (KSI)	**155**

1.9 In 2026, there have been two petitions presented to Full Council in Rotherham in relation to school road safety around local schools at Thorpe Hesley and Brampton Bierlow. There have also been a number of recent local news stories involving parent and school communities campaigning for better road safety around their schools or taking matters into their own hands. This demonstrates a growing frustration with the current situation and perceived lack of focused improvement.

1.10 From the limited engagement the Review Group has undertaken with local schools as part of this Review, the following issues have been frequently reported:

- parents parking dangerously around and outside school;
- parents pulling up to school late and letting their children out of the car door to cross the road in a dangerous fashion; and
- risk of children getting injured by vehicles when they arrive and leave school.





1.11 The current national and regional focus on issues around school road safety demonstrates that this Review marks a timely examination of issues within Rotherham and represents an opportunity for the Council to capitalise on potential new funding streams and strategies to support local interventions and improvements.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Alignment with the Council Plan

The Review is aligned with the following priorities under the Council Plan (2025-2030), as set out below.

2.1.1 **Places are Thriving, Safe and Clean**

The Council Plan states a commitment to "*building a borough where every neighbourhood thrives, green spaces are clean and accessible, and people feel safe – creating a space that residents can take pride in.*"

2.1.2 As part of helping people to feel safe in their communities, the Council has committed to deliver "*Safer roads schemes and initiatives which contribute to Vision Zero and help to improve road safety across the borough.*"

2.1.3 Members of the Review Group felt that the traffic and parking problems experienced around schools across the borough at school drop off and pick up times impact significantly on feelings of safety for residents, especially children. This is supported by recent petitions received by the Council requesting implementation of further road safety measures outside schools. Both pedestrians and road users are impacted, along with school staff and those who work to support road safety (such as Crossing Patrollers). The persistent congestion around schools and surrounding areas at key times also contributes to a growing sense of frustration with existing road networks and leads to a deterioration in feelings of pride residents may have for the area they live and go to school in.

2.1.4 **Children and Young People Achieve:**

The Council Plan states that "*We want Rotherham to be a great place to grow up; where all children and young people are safe, valued, and are able to achieve their aspirations*".

2.1.5 One of the key ways in which children are able to achieve their aspirations is by consistent attendance at a local school that meets their needs. Providing support to facilitate an enjoyable, stress-free and healthy journey to their school setting will help children to make the most of their education and get the best start in life through adopting an active lifestyle.

2.1.6 The Council is committed to "*building a safer Rotherham where every child feels safe, secure and supported*" and developing improved road safety around schools across the borough will contribute to this aim.

2.2 **Review Methodology**

2.2.1 A working group was convened which included the following Improving Places Select Commission Members:

- Councillor Adam Tinsley (Chair)
- Councillor Cameron McKiernan
- Councillor Jamie Baggaley
- Councillor Paul Thorp
- Councillor Lynda Stables
- Councillor Dominic Beck
- Councillor Ian Jones

(together, the Review Group)

2.2.2 Evidence gathering, round-table discussions and the development of agreed recommendations was undertaken between October 2025 and July 2026. A number of Council Officers and representatives from external partners were invited to participate in both in-person and virtual meetings, with representation from:

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (Council)

- Lucy Hudson - Head of Service, Transportation & Highways Design
- Nat Porter - Service Manager, Transport Planning & Policy
- Kevin Fisher - Service Director, Property and Facilities Services
- Qadir Karim - Facilities Resources Officer (Crossing Patrol)
- Martin Beard - Parking Services Manager
- Marc Hill - Engagement & Technical Support Manager
- Ellie Coote - Road Safety Education Officer, Training and Publicity

External Partners

- Kathryn Harrison - Senior Transport Planner, Sheffield City Council
- Mark Smith - Safer Roads Partnership Manager, SYMCA
- Nicola Marshall - Director of Active Lives and Safer Roads, SYMCA

2.2.3 The Review Group would like to put on record their thanks for the contribution of each Council Officer and external participant to the work of the Review Group, which provided valuable context and insight.

2.3 **Discussion themes and key insights**

2.3.1 Discussions at the meetings centred around the following themes:

2.4 **Cross-Directorate Working**

2.4.1 The first meeting of the Review involved Officers from Transportation & Highways and Property & Facilities Services, who manage the school Crossing Patrol service. This highlighted to Members that work undertaken to oversee school road safety cuts across a number of different Council directorates and services. Wider responsibility for school road safety is also spread across other external partners and organisations, such as the schools themselves and South Yorkshire Police (SY Police). It was acknowledged by Officers that current systems and processes would benefit from a review to ensure effective and timely incident reporting and data sharing. It was further acknowledged that clarity regarding enforcement responsibilities for certain parking and traffic offences could be improved.

2.4.2 It was highlighted to Members that road safety challenges outside schools are widespread and not confined to a small number of locations. Common issues reported include:

- Illegal and inappropriate parking;
- Traffic congestion during school arrival and departure times;
- Unsafe crossing conditions; and
- Near-miss incidents involving children and families.

2.4.3 Members noted that many concerns relate to perceived and actual risk rather than recorded collisions, meaning that existing accident data does not accurately reflect the scale of the problem.

2.4.4 Members and Officers discussed a range of behavioural and systemic factors that can contribute to road safety issues around schools, including:

- Increased reliance on private vehicles for school journeys rather than pedestrian use;
- School admissions patterns potentially creating longer travel distances for families out of catchment areas;
- Road and school site layouts that are not designed to accommodate current traffic volumes; and
- Parental convenience and the time pressures on busy working parents influencing travel choices.

2.4.5 A significant challenge identified by Officers was the absence of a comprehensive and consistent dataset to determine which schools within the borough are at greatest risk and should therefore have highest priority in terms of any interventions.

2.4.6 It was reported that current evidence sources, such as collision records and complaints data were fragmented and incomplete. While a borough-wide traffic survey covering approximately 140 schools was underway, it would primarily provide quantitative traffic information rather than capturing qualitative concerns such as near misses or unsafe behaviours.

2.4.7 Members were informed that there were limited funding streams available for specific initiatives, and Officers advised that substantial investment would be required to deliver borough-wide improvements through infrastructure changes, enforcement measures and behavioural initiatives.

2.4.8 Improved coordination and information sharing between Council directorates and external partners (such as SY Police) were identified as key requirements for future progress, alongside improved data collection and near-miss reporting systems. Members and Officers discussed the benefits of developing a cross-directorate map of roles and responsibilities in respect of school road safety.

2.4.9 Members shared anecdotal evidence of the common issues and complaints experienced by schools and families/road users within their wards. The need to conduct a thorough survey of all schools within the borough was discussed but as this would be a significant undertaking, with over 120 schools within the borough, it was agreed that for the purposes of this Review, limited engagement with schools would be preferable so as not to create unrealistic expectations.

2.4.10 In summary, this initial meeting highlighted that school road safety issues are widespread, complex and influenced by a combination of behavioural, environmental and organisational factors, as set out in paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.9 above. While current evidence and resources are limited, the Review represented a clear opportunity to improve understanding of the issues, strengthen partnership working and identify targeted interventions that could enhance safety for children, families and school communities across the borough.

2.5 **School Support & Active Travel Engagement**

2.5.1 Members met with Officers from Highways & Transportation who work in school engagement and provide schools with support with Active Travel initiatives. There is currently the equivalent of one full-time equivalent Officer in this role. These Officers are the most familiar with the common issues experienced outside and around schools within the borough and provide the main point of contact and relationship with schools and school leaders. A discussion was held regarding road safety concerns around schools, with a particular focus on parking issues.

2.5.2 It was reported to Members that the principal road safety concern around schools relates to parking behaviour, including:

- Parking on school keep-clear markings and zigzag areas;
- Obstruction of junctions, driveways, and footways;

- Unsafe drop-off and pick-up practices; and
- Increased congestion during school arrival and departure times.

2.5.3 Members heard that unsafe and inconsiderate parking can present a greater risk than speeding in many school environments. These issues have existed for many years and have become more pronounced over time due to increased vehicle usage, both in general terms and for the school commute. Parking issues outside schools can have a significant impact on local communities and can lead to conflict between residents and parents.

2.5.4 The enforcement resources required to effectively manage parking issues, are currently too limited to provide a regular presence across schools. It was reported that enforcement of parking issues is most effective when a joint approach is undertaken by the Council and SY Police, but both are insufficiently resourced. Remote, camera-based enforcement can be effective but is costly to implement and can sometimes have the effect of relocating parking problems to nearby areas.

2.5.5 Members and Officers discussed the current traffic management measures and interventions that are used around schools, including:

- “School Keep-Clear” zig-zag markings;
- Yellow line restrictions; and
- Advisory 20 mph zones.

2.5.6 However, it was commented that physical measures alone have proven insufficient without effective enforcement to support them.

2.5.7 Current and potential Active Travel measures and schemes were discussed, including:

- Walking buses;
- Improved cycling infrastructure; and
- Improved parking facilities for bikes at schools.

2.5.8 Officers expressed the opinion that whilst such initiatives had achieved varying levels of success, there is a need for stronger engagement with parents, whose travel choices largely determine transport pressures around schools.

2.5.9 The potential benefits of the “School Street” schemes which had been piloted in other local areas (such as Sheffield), whereby temporary road closures are put in place at key times around schools, were discussed. These schemes could deliver the combined aims of reduced vehicle activity around schools during school peak periods, improved pedestrian safety and encouragement of active travel. However, it was noted that the potential displacement of traffic and parking problems to surrounding roads remained a concern and something to monitor with existing schemes.

2.5.10 The importance of school and community engagement was highlighted, along with work that could be done to support schools to develop consistent messaging for parents and local residents regarding safe and considerate

travel behaviour. It was noted that encouraging schools to take a more active role in addressing issues beyond school boundaries would be challenging without a better offer of support from the Council and SY Police alongside them.

2.5.11 Discussions at this meeting concluded that no single intervention would be able to resolve school-related parking and road safety problems. A long-term sustainable solution would require a more coordinated, multi-agency approach to enforcement, coupled with enhanced education, behaviour change initiatives and improved support for community engagement around schools.

2.6 **Consideration of the School Streets Scheme**

2.6.1 At the next meeting of the Review Group, Members were joined by an Officer from Sheffield City Council who had been involved in the implementation of School Streets schemes within Sheffield. The objective of this meeting was to identify lessons and opportunities to inform a potential School Streets approach within Rotherham.

2.6.2 Members were told that Sheffield had adopted a phased, school-led approach to School Streets implementation. The programme commenced in 2021 with four pilot schemes and had since expanded to include 12 permanent schemes and seven trial schemes. The pilot schemes were partially funded by income generated from the introduction of charges for certain vehicles within designated Clean Air Zones.

2.6.3 A key principle of Sheffield's approach had been that the schemes were initiated and “owned” by schools rather than imposed by the local authority. This “buy in” to the scheme by the school and its leadership was seen to be key to the success. The importance of early consultation with schools and surrounding communities in relation to any pilot scheme was also stressed, in order to identify any potential pitfalls or opposition.

2.6.4 It was explained to Members that in Sheffield, for a school to be considered a School Streets scheme, it must be able to demonstrate existing commitment to sustainable travel initiatives, such as working towards Mode Shift Stars accreditation, along with strong existing engagement with pupils, parents and staff on Active Travel initiatives. Schools would then be evaluated against a range of evidence-based criteria, such as local air quality concerns, collision and accident history and traffic volumes and road layout.

2.6.5 Most School Streets schemes are initially introduced through Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs), allowing a trial period of between six and eighteen months. This provides flexibility to make adjustments and gather evidence before deciding whether to make a scheme permanent.

2.6.6 School Streets are typically delivered using temporary and low-cost infrastructure, such as planters, barrier tape and signage. They are also highly dependent on ongoing operational support from committed school

staff or volunteer marshals to patrol the road closures at the relevant times. Typical indicative costs for the implementation of a trial scheme were reported to be between £3,000-£5,000, depending on the complexity of the site and surrounding road network.



2.6.7 The Sheffield Officer reported a range of potential positive outcomes from School Streets schemes, such as

Road Safety and Environmental Benefits

- Significant reductions in vehicle traffic around school entrances.
- Improved safety for children and families.
- Improved local air quality.

Behaviour Change

- Noted increases in walking and cycling.
- Greater uptake of active travel modes.

Wider Community Benefits

- Calmer and more welcoming environments around schools at key times.
- Improved relationships between school staff and parents.
- Increased community involvement and engagement, due to a sense of “ownership” of the scheme.

2.6.8 Potential operational risks and challenges were highlighted to Members. For example, successful operation is heavily reliant on sustained school commitment, which could be significantly impacted by a change in school leadership and/or staff and volunteer availability.

2.6.9 Additionally, whilst traffic levels should be reduced around the immediate school area, vehicle movements can often be displaced to neighbouring streets, which has the potential to create new resident concerns that may require additional mitigation measures.

2.6.10 Members learnt from this informative session that Sheffield's experience demonstrates that School Streets can deliver measurable improvements in road safety, air quality and active travel behaviour. However, successful implementation depends on strong school leadership, sustained stakeholder engagement, effective monitoring and a flexible trial-based approach. For Rotherham, it would be necessary to first establish stronger foundations of school engagement, travel planning and evidence gathering before pursuing any pilot School Streets schemes.

2.7 **The Operation of Crossing Patrol across Rotherham**

2.7.1 The operation of Crossing Patrols at schools across Rotherham had been touched upon in previous meetings and Members had commented on the issues facing the service, such as recruitment and retention difficulties, an ageing workforce and safety concerns arising from poor driver behaviour at crossings.

2.7.2 A meeting with the Facilities Resources Officer, who manages Crossing Patrols in Rotherham, allowed Members to focus on the current position of the School Crossing Patrol Service, workforce recruitment and retention, operational improvements, key safety concerns, and future opportunities to enhance road safety around schools.

2.7.3 Members were informed that the School Crossing Patrol Service currently operates across 63 crossing sites throughout the borough, with approximately eight sites funded through Service Level Agreements where locations do not meet the standard eligibility criteria.

2.7.4 Eligibility for crossing patrol provision is assessed using the PV^2 formula, a calculation which considers both pedestrian and vehicle volumes to measure risk ($P \times V^2$ - *Pedestrians multiplied by vehicles squared*). A borough-wide survey of Crossing Patrol sites is currently underway, with some possible additional sites being reviewed.

2.7.5 Members were informed that the service had made notable progress in addressing workforce shortages in recent months, with the number of vacancies reduced and operational support strengthened.

2.7.6 The following improvements to recruitment processes were highlighted:

- Allowing offline application methods to improve accessibility;
- Enhanced advertising and promotional activity for the Crossing Patrol Service, including posters and attendance at job fairs; and
- Efforts to broaden the workforce profile, resulting in an increase in younger applicants entering the service.

2.7.7 However, despite these improvements, it was noted that recruitment and retention continue to be challenging due to the nature of the Crossing Patrol role, with split-shift working arrangements, limited contracted hours and concerns relating to road safety risks and day-to-day working conditions.

2.7.8 Members were informed that persistent driver non-compliance with parking restrictions and poor driver behaviour continues to affect feelings of safety around schools, for both pedestrians and the Crossing Patrollers helping them.

2.7.9 A number of measures had been recently introduced to strengthen service delivery and provide increased support to Crossing Patrol staff, including:

- The appointment of part-time supervisors to provide site visits, welfare support and operational oversight;
- The introduction of a more structured induction process for new recruits;
- Implementation of a formal incident reporting and escalation procedure; and
- Improved partnership working with SY Police and the Parking Enforcement and Transportation & Highways teams at the Council.

2.7.10 The potential introduction of body-worn cameras for Crossing Patrol staff was discussed in detail. The potential benefits identified of such equipment included improved evidence gathering, greater protection for Crossing Patrol staff experiencing challenging behaviours and enhanced reporting of safety incidents. There was, however, uncertainty over whether footage obtained from body-worn cameras could be used for enforcement purposes.

2.7.11 Members were informed that consideration had previously been given to the implementation of body-worn cameras, but this had not been progressed due to concerns relating to safeguarding and data protection. However, Members were aware of examples where other local authorities had introduced body-worn cameras, and a desktop-based research and benchmarking exercise confirmed that workable models with regard to safeguarding and data protection were available.

2.7.12 Enquiries of Officers at City of Doncaster Council revealed that whilst they had been looking to introduce body-worn cameras, this was currently on hold due to financial constraints.

2.7.13 Members were reassured that the School Crossing Patrol Service had made measurable progress in workforce recruitment and operational improvements in recent months. However, it was clear that significant challenges remain, particularly around driver behaviour, illegal parking, infrastructure constraints and funding availability. Members were keen that the Council undertake further exploration of the possible implementation of body-worn cameras and undertake assessment of the associated costs and potential funding options.

2.8 **Parking Issues and Enforcement**

2.8.1 In the next meeting of the Review Group, Members met with the Parking Services Manager, who provided a summary of how parking enforcement activity around schools is delivered in Rotherham.

2.8.2 Members were informed that parking enforcement outside schools is primarily undertaken via one mobile CCTV vehicle, which monitors vehicles stopping on school entrance “Keep Clear” zigzag markings. Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) are issued by post following evidence captured by the vehicle.

2.8.3 The borough contains more than 200 school access locations, making comprehensive coverage with limited resource challenging. Enforcement activity using a single mobile CCTV vehicle is therefore undertaken on a cyclical basis and targeted towards locations where complaints or concerns have been identified.

2.8.4 The service is supported by approximately nine Enforcement Officers and supervisory staff, with additional support provided periodically through contracted Environmental Enforcement Officers.

2.8.5 Since the introduction of CCTV-based enforcement in 2013, it was reported that compliance levels around schools had improved considerably. Current enforcement data demonstrated a decrease in the number of PCNs being issued. It was commented that this could reflect improved driver compliance but also acknowledged that limited enforcement coverage may also influence these decreasing figures.

Year	Number of PCNs issued for parking contravention outside schools
2015	223
2016	302
2017	259
2018	300
2019	267
2020	61 *pandemic
2021	156
2022	108
2023	132
2024	107
2025	96

2.8.6 A number of key challenges to parking enforcement outside schools were highlighted to Members, including:

Resource and Funding Constraints

- A single CCTV enforcement vehicle and limited staffing capacity currently restricts the Council’s ability to maintain a visible and

consistent enforcement presence across all school locations or to respond to emerging pressure points quickly.

Legislative Limitations

- Current legislation places restrictions on enforcement activity, such as the inability of the Council to use third-party evidence submitted by members of the public (see earlier concerns regarding footage from any body-cameras worn by Crossing Patrol operatives).
- For the Council to be able to take enforcement action, the evidence used must have been gathered either by Council Officers or by the Council's certified CCTV equipment.
- Use of PCN income is subject to statutory restrictions. Revenue must first cover the costs of operating the enforcement service, with any surplus required to be reinvested in Transport and Highways-related activities.

Pavement Parking

- Inappropriate parking on pavements and footways around schools is a frequent concern around schools. However, outside of London, local authorities currently have limited powers to enforce against this behaviour. The government is currently considering introducing legislation which would increase powers relating to pavement parking. Members expressed the hope that any future Council policy on Pavement Parking could benefit the parking situation around schools.

2.8.7 Members and Officers discussed the possible use of other CCTV technology, such as static or redeployable Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at school sites. This could improve compliance and expand enforcement capacity. However, it was noted that estimated costs were prohibitive at approximately £20,000 per camera, in addition to installation and licensing costs. It was suggested that cameras could be rotated between key locations to maximise effectiveness.

2.8.8 Members were keen that the service explore further the feasibility of deploying static or redeployable ANPR cameras to increase enforcement opportunities, with discussions around identifying pilot locations and potentially utilising ward budgets to support delivery.

2.8.9 The Parking Services Manager confirmed that body-worn cameras are already in use by Enforcement Officers and that their use was reported to have benefits for both evidential purposes and for staff safety.

2.8.10 Members were informed that some partnership working already takes place with SY Police on enforcement, although responsibilities and powers remain distinct. The meeting explored opportunities for greater collaboration with SY Police, including advisory letters and joint communications initiatives at problem locations.

2.8.11 The information presented to Members suggests that parking enforcement activity has contributed positively to improving compliance and road safety

around schools, particularly through the use of CCTV enforcement. However, the effectiveness and reach of the service is constrained by limited resources, legislative restrictions, and the scale of the borough's school estate. As with the other areas considered above, it is clear that increased investment in infrastructure and collaborative multi-agency working will be key to ongoing progress in this area.

2.9 **Engagement with SYMCA**

2.9.1 In the final meeting of the Review Group, Members met with representatives from SYMCA to discuss regional strategic priorities and opportunities for improving road safety around schools in South Yorkshire. SYMCA advocated a move towards a more strategic, data-led and collaborative approach to road safety, underpinned by the Safe System approach (see 1.6 above) and supported by strategic Action Plans in each constituent local authority.

2.9.2 SYMCA shared regional data on KSIs in South Yorkshire and highlighted significant concerns regarding child casualty rates. South Yorkshire experiences high levels of child casualties, particularly involving pedestrians, with outcomes currently worse than the national average. It was explained to Members that there are limitations in the availability and timeliness of official road safety data. This can restrict the ability of local authorities to identify and respond quickly to emerging risks and trends.

2.9.3 SYMCA's strategic approach to road safety is intended to align with the developing National Road Safety Strategy to support reductions in deaths and serious injuries, including those involving children. SYMCA is also developing a regional strategic action plan aimed at creating greater consistency across South Yorkshire authorities and addressing historical variations in local approaches.

2.9.4 SYMCA advocated for the move to a more holistic approach going forward, combining infrastructure improvements, behavioural change, Active Travel initiatives and enforcement measures. This would help the region to break the cycle of increasing school-related car use, whereby concerns about road safety lead to more children being driven to school, which in turn, increases congestion and creates further safety risks.

2.9.5 SYMCA identified that delivery of school road safety initiatives across the region had previously been fragmented, with no consistent process for prioritising schools for intervention. The discussion emphasised the importance of moving away from isolated, one-off schemes towards more coordinated programmes supported by evidence and data. Use of mapping tools, travel route analysis and collision data was identified as essential for prioritising investment and intervention. Members were informed that SYMCA may be able to support Rotherham in accessing such tools by utilising economies of scale through SYMCA-led procurement processes.

2.9.6 Two principal funding streams available to Rotherham via SYMCA were discussed:

- Transport for City Regions (TCR) – this would primarily support larger-scale infrastructure schemes.
- Active Travel Funding – this would be intended to support smaller, place-based interventions, particularly in and around schools.

2.9.7 Discussions took place between Members and SYMCA Officers around the challenges currently faced in respect of the delivery of school road safety initiatives in Rotherham, including limited dedicated resources and funding pipelines. It was reflected that there is also the ongoing need to balance investment in major transport and infrastructure projects with smaller-scale local road safety improvements.

2.9.8 SYMCA stressed the potential benefits of Rotherham considering a systemic, cultural shift towards integrated working and a more collaborative programme of delivery across Council services and with regional partners. This strengthened coordination, coupled with improved data utilisation could help the Council to better prioritise road safety schemes and develop more robust business cases to maximise funding opportunities.

2.9.9 This very informative meeting provided a useful overview of regional priorities for Members and highlighted a clear opportunity for Rotherham to strengthen its approach to school road safety through improved strategic coordination and an enhanced use of data to aid the development of a structured programme of interventions. Members found it encouraging that SYMCA's regional approach could offer a framework for greater consistency, better partnership working and improved access to resources.

2.10 **Conclusion**

2.10.1 From the information provided, and the discussions that took place as part of this Review, it was clear to Members that a number of longstanding challenges to delivery, combined with limited resource for enforcement and engagement, have had the impact of minimising the effectiveness of current interventions with regard to school road safety in Rotherham. The meetings highlighted the need for a more coordinated, longer-term, holistic approach to school road safety, with better coordination across Council directorates and regional partners to drive improvement.

2.10.2 To effectively address school-related parking and road safety concerns, sustained partnership working from all stakeholders will be required to develop and embed the necessary:

- infrastructure improvements;
- targeted enforcement;
- increased education and awareness;
- better community engagement;
- support for schools and school leaders; and
- wider behaviour change programmes for road users.

2.10.3 Ongoing and improved programmes and processes for monitoring and robust evaluation will also be required to ensure that measurable improvements and safer environments are delivered for children and residents around schools.

2.10.4 Members are of the opinion that the timing of this Review and its recommendations represent an opportunity for Rotherham to capitalise on the current national and regional support and appetite for widespread improvements to school road safety and the promotion of Active Travel initiatives.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option A: Do nothing. (Not recommended)

The option of not accepting any of the proposed recommendations is not recommended as this would arguably not lead to any improvement in the road safety situation around schools. Members feel that this option would not be in the best interests of Rotherham residents, especially children, and would not contribute to achieving the commitments identified in the Council Plan.

3.2 Option B: Support the recommendations outlined in this report. (Preferred Option)

Members are of the opinion that by supporting and implementing the recommendations suggested within this report, demonstrable and sustained improvements can be made in school road safety across the borough for Rotherham residents. Members acknowledge that a long-term, sustainable solution will require a coordinated, multi-agency approach across a number of directorates and services across the Council, together with external partners and agencies. However, Members feel that there is a distinct opportunity at the present time, to realise meaningful and lasting improvements by committing to the delivery of the identified recommendations. Supporting these recommendations would also contribute to achieving the Council Plan commitments referred to above.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 In its review, the working group considered evidence from Council Officers and representatives from key external partners. Those who participated are outlined in paragraph 2.2.2. Feedback from a small number of schools across the borough was requested, but only a limited response received.

4.2 In their role as elected representatives of Rotherham residents, Members also paid regard to the expressed views and lived experience of their constituents in conducting this Review.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The accountability for implementing recommendations arising from this report will sit with Cabinet and relevant Officers.

5.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules require Cabinet to consider and respond to recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Select Commissions in no more than two months from the date that Cabinet receives this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 No financial implications arise directly from this report. Cabinet's response to the Review will need to take into account any financial implications arising from implementation of the scrutiny recommendations.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications directly arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications for Children, Young People, and Vulnerable Adults are set out in the main body of the report. As set out in 2.1.4 above, the proposed recommendations support the Council Plan objective that "*Children and Young People Achieve".*

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Furthering equalities and human rights are scrutiny objectives. Members have paid due regard to equalities and human rights in the development of these recommendations, which are designed to support the Council Plan and improve the delivery of council services for residents.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no climate or emissions implications directly associated with this report. However, support and encouragement of Active Travel initiatives and reducing car use for journeys to school will contribute to the Council's Net Zero targets.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Implications for partners, such as SYMCA and SY Police, are set out in the main section of the report outlining the Commission's findings. Members have had regard to the fact that a number of the recommendations involve increased partnership and multi-agency working with outside bodies and

acknowledge that there may be logistical implications associated with this. Cabinet will need to consider the implications for partners in its response to the recommendations from scrutiny.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Members have regard to the risks and mitigation factors associated with the services under scrutiny and have made recommendations accordingly.

14. Accountable Officers

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	19/10/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	20/10/26

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