

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION

Date and Time:- Tuesday 9 June 2026 at 10.00 a.m.

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

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

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

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

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

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

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 3 - 20)

3.

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th April, 2026 as a true and correct record of the proceedings and to be signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

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

4. Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

5. Questions from Members of the Public and the Press

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

6. Health, Welfare and Safety Panel - Representative from Improving Lives Select Commission (Pages 21 - 22)

To seek a representative from the Improving Lives Select Commission to sit as a member on the Health, Welfare and Safety Panel.

7. Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Update

To receive a verbal update on the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board following the meeting held on 5th May, 2026.

8. Update on Kinship Local Offer (Pages 23 - 37)

To note the progress made in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer.

9. Experts at Hand (EAH) - Rotherham SEND Reform and Inclusion Model (Pages 38 - 51)

To review the Experts At Hand delivery model and provide advice on implementation and delivery.

10. Improving Lives Select Commission - Terms of Reference (Pages 52 - 53)
Shared for information purposes only.

11. Work Programme 2026/27 (Pages 54 - 55)

To consider and approve the Commission's Work Programme for the 2026/27 municipal year.

12. Urgent Business

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

**The next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission
will be held on Tuesday 21 July 2026
commencing at 10.00 a.m.
in Rotherham Town Hall.**



John Edwards,
Chief Executive.

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 28 April 2026

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

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Garnett and Ismail and Mr. J. Newman.

Also in attendance were:-

Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader
Darren Downs, Independent Chair
Kelly White, Service Director and Link Officer
Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding
Stuart Williams, Service Director for Children's Social Care
Chief Superintendent Andy Wright, South Yorkshire Police

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

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

48. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 17th March, 2026 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

52. CORPORATE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP BOARD UPDATE

Councillor Brent, Vice-Chair, provided an overview of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board held on 24th March, 2026.

The Chair thanked Elected Members for their support and kind words offered at a recent extraordinary meeting of Full Council, where foster carer Christine Lunn had been awarded the Freedom of the Borough in

recognition of her outstanding contribution to children and young people in Rotherham over more than fifty years as a foster carer.

The Service Director presented the Action Log, Work Programme, and the Forward Plan for 2026/27. Members also requested the inclusion of an additional item at the May 2026 meeting to receive an update on the Residential Development Programme, which had been a priority focus for Children and Young People's Services throughout 2025.

The Service Director presented the Annual Report 2025, which had previously been shared for feedback. As this was the first annual report produced by the Board, Members welcomed it, although the Chair noted that future reports would be brought forward earlier to allow greater Member input.

Virtual Head Teachers attended to present the Virtual School Annual Report, providing a comprehensive overview of achievement, attendance, progress, and aspirations for children in care.

The Board then received an update on preparation for adulthood, including a presentation on how children in care were supported into adulthood and the care leaver offer.

A further update was provided by Adult Social Care, outlining support for children with additional and complex needs transitioning into adulthood. This demonstrated effective partnership working between Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care.

The Head of Service then presented the Q3 Performance on a Page, after which the Chair invited discussion on reviewing priority areas for 2026/27, the commencement of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2027/30, associated working groups and the potential for a children and young people takeover event.

The meeting concluded with a video presentation prepared by the Children's Care Group, focusing on preparation for adulthood. The children delivered a game-show-style "Beat the Buzzer" presentation, highlighting what they felt was most important in terms of support as they moved into adulthood.

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

53. CORPORATE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the first Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Annual Report, introduced by the Cabinet Member/Deputy Leader which had been brought to Improving Lives Scrutiny to outline progress made over the past year in fulfilling corporate parenting responsibilities.

The report provided assurance on how partners had worked together to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers, highlighting key achievements, challenges and the impact of partnership working. Corporate parenting was a shared responsibility across the Council and its partners and thanks were given to all contributors including young people.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting:-

- Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader
- Stuart Williams, Service Director for Children's Social Care

Stuart Williams, Service Director for Children's Social Care, in presenting the Annual Report outlined that it captured the collective work of the local authority, partners and young people over the previous twelve months, focusing on delivering high-quality, consistent care and support for children in care and care-experienced young people. He highlighted the significant achievements of the year, the priority areas for the year ahead and reaffirmed the Council's ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for children in care.

By way of the presentation included in the agenda pack, the following was highlighted:-

- Purpose of the report.
- What was Corporate Parenting.
- Key Achievements in 2025.
- Ofsted Inspection – November, 2025.
- Priorities for 2026.

A discussion and answer session ensued with Improving Lives Members and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- How had the redesigned Corporate Parenting Partnership Board impacted outcomes across education, health, emotional wellbeing and preparation for independence, noting the positive external validation that had been received.

The Service Director for Children's Social Care explained that the redesign of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board had been guided by two overarching priorities. The first was ensuring consistent and meaningful engagement with children and young people so that they set the tone and identified priority areas.

This was supported by a robust range of evidence, including quality assurance data, audit activity and peer review, to inform a comprehensive self-assessment of priorities.

The second priority was restructuring the Board's work around six clear priority themes. Each meeting focused on a themed priority

with children and young people undertaking work on that theme outside meetings and meeting directly with the Champion Member and Lead Officer. Their feedback was then reported back to the full Board, ensuring they were central to decision-making and acted as the measure of success. This approach enabled dedicated focus on specific areas, such as education, employment and training, supported by presentations from senior education officers and virtual school heads. It was also noted strengthened corporate ownership across the wider Council and partner organisations.

The Cabinet Member also added that the use of Champion Members and Link Officers reflected good practice and enabled meaningful work to take place between meetings, recognising both the limited number of meetings each year and the need to ensure children's participation was purposeful.

It was noted that themes had been developed collaboratively with children and young people, allowing progress between meetings. Following the LGA peer review, more senior decision-makers had been present at meetings, improving responsiveness and reducing delays. Housing was cited as an example where senior attendance had enabled practical issues to be resolved more quickly. This redesign was described as a catalyst that had driven corporate parenting forward at pace.

- What tangible examples of improved outcomes had arisen from the redesign of the Board.

The Service Director for Children's Social Care highlighted two key examples. First, children and young people had contributed directly to foster carer training by shaping learning on what made a good foster carer. This work had influenced the "Skills to Foster" programme and had been particularly impactful for prospective carers. Second, priorities identified by care-experienced young people had informed changes to the housing allocations policy, helping translate young people's views into operational policy change.

The Cabinet Member provided further assurance by noting that she had visited other local authorities, including Southampton and Middlesbrough, to observe their corporate parenting arrangements and that a lead member from Doncaster was due to observe Rotherham's Board, reflecting recognition of effective practice.

The Head of Safeguarding highlighted the developmental benefits for young people involved in the Board, describing increased confidence, presentation skills and inclusion.

Examples included a young person receiving a Children's Champion award during Safeguarding Awareness Week and the growth of the

Young Journalists group, which had interviewed senior leaders and produced newsletters.

- Clarification was sought on children in care 2025 placement data on page 24 of the agenda pack, particularly the distinction between in-house and in-borough provision of 53% and 47%.

The Service Director for Children's Social Care explained that in-house provision referred to Council-approved foster carers and Council-run residential homes, whilst non-in-house placements were typically commissioned through independent fostering providers. Furthermore, placements not classed as in-house could still be within Rotherham with placement decisions driven by children's best interests given careful scrutiny. Details of the placement data for children and young people would be collated and circulated.

- Should community support be sought before opening new children's residential homes.

The Cabinet Member explained that engagement with Ward Councillors took place where possible, but that children's homes were typically small domestic properties and planning and regulatory constraints limited broader consultation. It was emphasised that children's welfare was prioritised and that community understanding often improved once homes were established.

Further discussion focused on challenging public misconceptions about children in care and residential provision. Members acknowledged the need to change narratives while protecting children's privacy.

Detail was provided on how home managers supported children's inclusion in local communities through everyday activities that promoted belonging and wellbeing.

The Cabinet Member asked if there were instances where Ward Members were not being engaged in processes then if the details could be forwarded she would look into it.

- Within the work done by the Cabinet Member around the country was there any examples of a Local Authority or an independent fostering authority that had managed to tell its story in a way that was sensitive to the fact that these children had a right to privacy and how this narrative could be changed.

The Cabinet Member referred to the LGA's Children and Families Committee and the mix of views and challenges around Post 16 residential placements.

The key issue appeared to be around Planning and how this narrative and language could be changed by working with young people and the challenges they faced when coming into care.

The Cabinet Member agreed to take the views back to see if any changes were possible to the narrative surrounding children in care and care leavers and how it could be positively reframed to challenge stigma and dispel common myths.

The Service Director for Early Help explained that there was something particularly important about how children's homes engaged with local communities. It was noted that highly skilled managers ran the homes and were actively involved in their local areas. Positive examples of children being integrated into their communities in ordinary but meaningful ways were provided, such as playing locally, building relationships with neighbours and being invited to birthday parties. Although these examples might appear small, they were highly significant for children in care and should be available to all children. Furthermore, it was important for managers and staff to feel part of the community and this was the narrative being supported across all homes.

An observation was shared where recently a young person in a meeting had shared a powerful account of their housing experiences, demonstrating the impact of the redesign and reinforced that the new approach was driving meaningful change.

- The inclusion of named leads against actions in the action plan was welcomed, but clarification was sought on actions awaiting start dates or delayed when reading from the RAG status on Page 35 of the document pack.

The Service Director for Social Care confirmed the action plan was a live document, reviewed regularly, with progress with each Champion Officer discussed at monthly 1:1 meetings. The updates were then collated into a report that was then presented to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board at each meeting. Some of the delays reflected ambition to meet young people's expectations, such as developing an app rather than a basic alternative.

Officers were working extremely hard with partners and the plan would evolve over time with new actions included that aligned to the new priorities for 2026/27.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the positive step to have a named person to lead on key actions which reflected the changes of personnel. In addition, there had also been progress on making meetings more accessible for young people with the inclusion of video pen portraits of Board members identifying who they were, what their role was and likes and dislikes. This made Board

Members more human to young people and hopefully would encourage greater feedback and a willingness to attend meetings with an eventual takeover challenge and an agenda set accordingly.

The more work that could be done with the young journalists and the setting up of a communications team would provide more engagement and communication with the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board. From the recent Ofsted visit, Inspectors were impressed with the capturing the voice of the young person. It may not be possible to provide all what young people were requesting and manage their expectations, but where any requests made could not be met the young people would be advised why it could not be achieved.

- Concern was raised about reliance on independent fostering agencies and the proportion of children in in-house provision and what action could be taken to lessen the use of independent fostering agencies.

The Service Director for Social Care explained that increasing in-house provision was a clear priority and outlined the strong recruitment, retention and support for foster carers, alongside innovative training aligned to children's needs.

In terms of recruitment activity across Yorkshire and Humber, Rotherham was very strong in terms of the amount of applicants and the conversion rate to approval. Rotherham's offer was good and whilst the pace of recruitment had slowed, this was the case nationally. There was still work to be undertaken and this remained a Children and Young People's Services and a Council priority.

The Cabinet Member further added that Rotherham compared favourably with national averages and remained committed to increasing in-house provision. Foster carers genuinely appreciated the amount of support provided by Rotherham and every effort would be made to increase the provision further.

The discussion concluded with consideration of proactive, programme-level communication to address misconceptions about children's homes.

Members suggested broader engagement, including with parish councils, and it was acknowledged there may be a requirement to reflect further on how narrative change could be strengthened whilst still maintaining privacy and regulatory requirements.

The Service Director for Social Care described the engagement with local residents as being an absolute priority when looking at in-house provision. The difficulty was that from a process perspective it had to be managed with clear provision on how this was launched

and operated. It was an expectation that ongoing discussions would take place with Ward Members, but not with residents until further in the process post planning and post Ofsted registration. This had to be balanced and whilst the privacy of children in care had to be maintained, they had the same rights as the wider cohort of children and young people within Rotherham as community members.

There was often some misconception within the community about a children's home, but a good children's home should blend into a community. That was a sign of success.

Location of a children's home was key and it would not be where young people were fundamentally unsafe. However, this needed to be managed in terms of the process and the checks and balances that run alongside. Every location was risk assessed and all homes Ofsted validated.

- Managing the misconception about children's provision earlier to make it easier for them to integrate successfully into a community.

The Service Director for Social Care reiterated that in terms of in-house provision communication with communities was limited, but later in the journey when submitting an application to Ofsted

The Cabinet Member would pick up on liaising with Parish Councils, but reiterated the suggestion around the narrative surrounding children in care and care leavers in the overall programme.

The Chair thanked Members for the discussion and the presentation and information by officers.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the progress by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board be noted.

(2) That the areas of focus for 2026 also be noted.

(3) That a breakdown of the Children in Care 2025 placement numbers be provided.

(4) That the Cabinet Member be tasked with asking the LGA's Children and Families Committee if they were aware of any work being undertaken to change the narrative surrounding children in care and care leavers and how it could be positively reframed to challenge stigma and dispel common myths.

54. CHILD EXPLOITATION STRATEGY 2024-29

Consideration was given to the report which outlined progress against the objectives in the Strategy at the conclusion of the second of the five years following approval by Cabinet in July 2024.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting:-

- Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader
- Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding
- Kelly White, Service Director and Link Officer
- Darren Downs, Independent Chair
- Chief Superintendent Andy Wright, South Yorkshire Police

The Cabinet Member had pleasure in presenting the Child Exploitation Strategy

progress update and explained how the strategy outlined the multi-agency approach to preventing, identifying and responding to all forms of child exploitation. The strategy had a strong focus on early intervention, partnership working and listening to the voices and experiences of children and young people, but also recognised the evolving nature of exploitation and the need for a co-ordinated and trauma-informed response across safeguarding partners.

The strategy also set clear priorities and shared responsibilities to ensure that children at risk were protected, supported and able to recover, while exploitation was prevented, disrupted and responded to through co-ordinated partnership working.

The strategy embedded trauma-informed practise within specialist exploitation and safeguarding services and the delivery of this was recognised by Ofsted.

Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, walked the Commission through the presentation which had been circulated with the agenda pack and highlighted:-

The definition of the Strategy:-

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

The duties of the Strategy:-

- The Council has a duty to safeguard children and provide services to children and their families to promote their welfare.
- The Council also has a duty to work with partner agencies and partner agencies have a duty to work with the Council to keep children safe.
- Exploitation of children is a pernicious crime and the Council's

commitment to tackling it remains unwavering, as does our commitment to listen and learn from past mistakes.

The background to the Strategy:-

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

Rotherham's Safeguarding Children's Partnership:-

- Under the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, the Lead Safeguarding Partners are:-
 1. The Chief Executive of Rotherham MBC
 2. The Chief Executive of South Yorkshire ICB
 3. The Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police
- The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are:-
 1. Strategic Director, Children's Services, Rotherham MBC
 2. Director of Nursing, South Yorkshire ICB
 3. Chief Superintendent for Rotherham, South Yorkshire Police

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

Governance:-

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

There are four priorities:

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

Prepare:-

- Rolling multi-agency training programme, led by our specialist Evolve service, which considers wider 'Harm Outside The Home' approaches too.
- Rigorous approach to taxi licensing in Rotherham, which was

commended in Baroness Casey's National Audit.

- Section 175 self-assessments and our follow-up assurance visits explicitly consider how schools safeguard children from exploitation and online harm.
- Improved early intervention, as identified through partner agencies completing more of our Family Assessments of Need.

Prevent:-

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

Protect:-

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

Pursue:-

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

Ofsted ILACS November 2025 Quote.

Priorities in the next twelve months:-

- Developing the Harm Outside The Home approach to grow the focus on locations and 'hotspots', in conjunction with CETG, Neighbourhood Tasking Groups and Community Action Partnerships.
- Improved interface for partners with the launch of the Children's Portal, which will allow partner agencies to submit their Family

Assessment of Need directly onto Early Help and Children's Social Care systems.

- Sharpening the link between intelligence and the focus of Operation Keepsafe and Operation Makesafe.
- Developing improved child exploitation training packages for non-traditional partners from the leisure and hotel industries.
- Positioning the workplan to ensure a focus on what data demonstrates are the most prominent forms of harm.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

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

- With regards to the multi-agency engagement with people on Page 57, Section 1.8 of the agenda pack if did indicate that services would engage with any parent to try and help the child. What would happen if parents were unwilling to engage either through fear, cultural challenges or a mistrust of agencies.

The Head of Safeguarding confirmed child protection processes set out clearly thresholds to be worked to. There was a whole raft of different approaches should engagement become an issue. Social Workers were skilled in what may drive this kind of behaviour, but the priority remained that the starting position would be to keep a young person safe by working with the family first.

It was inevitable that young people would need time to build a rapport with professionals, but persistence, creativity and honesty would pay off.

The Service Director for Early Help emphasised the specialist skills required to establish effective relationships with young people and recognised the dependence on other professionals who often spend more time supporting them.

- Were there any interventions around online safety, addiction to screen time for families in Rotherham in terms of practical support and was this recognised as an issue.

The Service Director of Early Help acknowledged this was difficult and not straightforward as it was a form of activity that could not readily be controlled. Some intervention work was taking place about school readiness and transition rather than any reliance on electronic devices.

A raft of support was available for parents through Family Hubs and it was about how people could be encouraged to engage without requiring a device to do so. This needed to be a partnership, particularly around the school readiness for children. If families were

identifying screen use as an issue, they could seek support through the MASH who would be able to signpost and connect families with the support that was available.

- Reference was made to working with hotels and if there was any influence of having a home screen prompting staff to be vigilant in spotting suspicious behaviour on check in.

In addition, it was noted that many young people exposed to exploitation from a young age did not associate that this behaviour was inappropriate. What was the earliest age work was taking place with young people to demonstrate what healthy relationships looked like and whether there was a willingness to commence this work in pre-school when children were starting to forge friendships.

The Head of Safeguarding addressed the second point first and confirmed Rotherham was fortunate to have an education safeguarding lead who engaged all schools in Rotherham.

One of the Safeguarding Education Delivery Groups was also supporting schools on the delivery of early work on relationships, relationship dynamics and what exploitation or coercion looked like with influence on the PSEE curriculum.

Further investigation would be required to see what work was taken place in the primary sector as the work was primarily undertaken in secondary schools.

The Cabinet Member reflected on previous work and the need to be ahead of the curve in addressing healthy relationships. In secondary schools it was a key part of the national curriculum with little focus in primary on intimate relationships with more on friendships and teamwork.

It was important to look at this at a younger age and further information on what was taking place or available would be made available to the Commission. The national curriculum was under review with a keen focus from the Government on life skills.

Where a gap was identified in Rotherham this would need to be delivered through the family homes network and the positive relationships with schools and early years providers was growing because of the changes in legislation.

The Independent Safeguarding Chair referred back to the question about hotels and keeping people safe, but whilst there may be some quick wins around screensavers, the challenge being faced was with many hotels being part of national chains.

As the world was changing many people no longer checked into hotels preferring to book an Airbnb and not a normal taxi preferring an Uber.

It was important to stay ahead of the curve and Rotherham was further down the line than other authorities. This was recognised in the recent inspection and the evidence within Baroness Casey's report.

- Speaking from experience it appeared that some primary schools were sharing healthy relationship training with children.

In preparation of the priorities and the approach for rigorous taxi licencing with the surge of Uber and drivers licensed in other areas coming to drive in Rotherham, it may be quite a stretch to achieve.

The Head of Safeguarding confirmed there were challenges created by the licencing scheme, but the licensing system in Rotherham was very robust. There were some local authorises who have issued a larger number of taxi licences, but it was important for this to be a focus and presented to a regional forum across all of South Yorkshire on approaches and opportunities. There were some licensing elements that would require a legislative change.

- There was still one weak area within the licensing sector and this was in relation to takeaways who had suppressed hours of opening. Lobbying was taking place to the Food Standards Agency about registration as there had evidence that these takeaways were often a front for modern slavery and this needed to be tightened.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that these incidents had not been found in Rotherham. These details would be shared with Community Safety and Environmental Health about the risks of exploitation associated with non-licensed food premises.

The Chief Superintendent provided assurance that whilst some of these issues fell outside of the licencing regime in terms of some of the Council mechanisms, the benefit of the Child Exploitation Delivery Group was that any intelligence received, regardless of its status, would be discussed with all relevant partners around the table. So whilst the Council might not have the right levers through the licencing legislation, actually other partners may have the right levers to be able to investigate any concerns that were raised.

- Reference was again made to the healthy relationships work within primary schools, but with focus on how addictive social media and screen activity was becoming. Was there anything taking place in schools to address this.

The Cabinet Member confirmed this kind of work was already taking place by Me In Mind.

- Clarification was sought on information on Page 59 Section 2.5 which talking about building strong links with probation who attended the Child Exploitation Delivery Group which provided joined up management of risk from offenders.
- The Chair confirmed this did refer specifically to offenders and asked looking back at the previous strategy if anyone was working with non-traditional partners such as contractors in terms of their awareness of exploitation and how to channel that intelligence into the right channels.

The Head of Safeguarding described the “Spot the Signs” public campaign used to influence the likes of contractors and non-traditional partners. Much of this work on intelligence has led to the opportunity to disrupt some exploitation much earlier for young people.

- Reference was made to the Government launching a twelve-week campaign about taxi licencing that closed on 1st April and the potential of it coming under the remit of the combined authority. It was imperative that the excellent work in Rotherham should not be diluted. Did anyone have any insight about the direction of travel.

The Chair of Licensing acknowledged the concerns of other drivers being licensed in other areas, but confirmed Rotherham’s licensing model was held in regard as best practice.

The Independent Safeguarding Chair endorsed what the Chair of Licensing had just said and confirmed that presentations had been made to the South Yorkshire wide Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Group about pushing further and extending safeguards to Uber and Airbnb establishments. This did not guarantee safety, but gave additional assurances.

- Was consideration given to engagement, when children were brought into care, with parents and the support that may be available if this failed.

The Service Director for Social Care confirmed that with any interventions, the relationships with families continued regardless of where children ended up within a very complex system. Where a child entered local authority care this was due to an acute issue where a child needed to be kept safe. The position of the local authority was from an intervention perspective to get that child back home with parents. To ensure effective relationships with parents the Council’s excellent support and intervention services sat within both family help and children's social care.

If adults were choosing not to engage with services children were often left in the situation they were. However, there were proactive efforts to explore avenues for children to return home.

The Cabinet Member responded by confirmed there were many valid reasons why children were often placed at a distance when there was a need to remove them from where the exploitation had been taking place.

The Service Director for Early Help provided additional assurance that whilst opportunities were considered for children to return home, there was acceptance that family circumstances did change and life did move on. A Panel looked at children's situations and whether they were likely to return home to parents or even extended family members and how best this could happen. There was often a knowledge gap and consideration was given as how to upskill parents to make a child returning home a success.

- Over the life of the strategy and the headline, harm outside the home, had there been any feedback as to whether there was a link between the online harms that technically did occur within the home outside of the family relationship.

The Head of Safeguarding confirmed there were occasions where exploitation began online and progressed to the real world. The feedback had been universally positive with examples of young people delivering their experiences.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged this was a good point that it had been picked up nationally and things were progressing at a pace. Up to that point, people talked about contextual safeguarding, but there did not appear to be a shared understanding of what that really meant. It was, therefore, reframed using more straightforward language around harm outside the home, which was quite different from traditional social work focused on families, neglect and intra-familial abuse. Over time, a clearer term or framework may emerge that better captured this.

There had been developments such as online abuse legislation and wider discussions about online harms alongside the concept of harm outside the home. This could create an assumption that if a child was physically at home say, in a bedroom they were safe, which was not always the case. This would be brought up at the next LGA meeting.

The Service Director for Early Help provided some assurance that as part of the Family First programme work was taking place about language with particular focus on the use of plain language.

A series of workshops was also being run with families and children who have experienced services, spanning Family Help right the way through to statutory social care, to ensure their voices were heard.

Importantly, this work was not about changing thresholds. The threshold descriptions remained the same, and the law had not changed. Instead, the focus was on how those thresholds were described in a more family-friendly way, particularly for those engaging with services.

Two workshops were held last week and another was scheduled for the 30th April, 2026. Sessions were also being held with practitioners. It was highly likely that Harm Outside the Home, both as a concept and as terminology, would feature in those discussions as well.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made against the Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29 be noted.

(2) That consideration be given as to what work is taking place in the primary sector around the work on healthy relationships.

(3) That detail be shared with Community Safety and Environmental Health about the risks of exploitation associated with non-licensed food premises.

(4) That consideration be given as to how to equip non-traditional partners and contractors to identify and respond to child exploitation now and in the future.

55. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - WORKSHOP, SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

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

- Children's Capital of Culture Workshop

A dedicated workshop took place on Tuesday, 21st April, 2026.

An invitation was also extended to Improving Places Select Commission and several Members joined the workshop.

The session shared the results of the interim evaluation followed by a short film and an opportunity for Members to share their experiences focusing on Member engagement - what worked well, what could be better and ward experience - what took place in their wards, what worked well, what could be better.

Members that did attend welcomed the excellent information that was shared and welcomed the opportunity to discuss at length the

evaluation process for the Children's Capital of Culture and fed back their own experiences which would be incorporated into the results and included in the final evaluation report.

- Children and Young People's Partnership Board

Several Members of Improving Lives were also due to attend the meeting of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board on 28th April, 2026 at the invitation of the young people who welcomed the opportunity for a pre-decision scrutiny session on their strategy and their priorities moving forward.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

56. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

BRIEFING	TO:	Improving Lives Select Commission
	DATE:	9 th June, 2026
	TITLE:	Health, Safety and Welfare Panel Representation
1. Role of the Health, Safety & Welfare Panel		
	The Health, Welfare and Safety Panel provides a regular forum for the Council and its employees to consider matters relating to health, welfare and safety and to provide advice, guidance and recommendations to appropriate Committees or other Council bodies. Objectives of the Panel include:- • To promote a healthy and safe working environment for all members of staff employed by the Council and to protect the public from any risk of danger that may arise as a result of the Council's activities. • To monitor the welfare arrangements (facilities for eating, drinking, first aid and toilets, etc) provided for employees. • To provide a forum for consultation on proposals put forward by management and by the trades unions. • To recommend changes to the way in which work is performed by the introduction of safe systems of work, procedures and arrangements, including those for the training of staff. • To monitor statistics on accidents, incidents and illness and to recommend action to address key issues which may arise from that information. • To promote greater awareness of health, welfare and safety policies to assist in facilitating improvement in Council performance.	
2. Membership and Request for Member Representation from the Member & Democratic Panel		
	The Panel comprises six Elected Members of the Council to be appointed annually, including Member(s) from: • Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health, Welfare and Safety. • A member from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. • One member from each of the Select Commissions (Scrutiny). • A member from the Members' Training and Development Panel.	
3. Membership and Request for Member Representation from the Member & Democratic Panel		
	The Panel also has representation from the Employees' Side and includes: • At least three teacher representatives (NASUWT and NEU Trades Unions).	

- A maximum of seven representatives from all other areas of Council work e.g. UNISON, UNITE the Union, GMB.

4. Frequency of Meetings / Visits

The Panel shall normally meet four times per year. Additional meetings may be held if the business to be transacted is sufficiently urgent. The meetings scheduled for 2026/27 are:-

9th July, 2026 at 2.00 p.m.

15th October, 2026 at 2.00 p.m.

4th February, 2027 at 2.00 p.m.

22nd April, 2027 at 2.00 p.m.

Inspection visits by the Panel shall be made on a quarterly basis to various locations throughout the borough. Visits of inspection are scheduled to take place on:-

17th June, 2026 at 8.45 a.m. (from the Town Hall)

Other dates to be confirmed

Refreshments are available from 8.30 a.m. prior to departure.

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 09 June 2026

Report Title

Update on Kinship Local Offer

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

Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, Children & Young People's Services

chris.macdonald@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

On 7th July 2025, Cabinet approved the Kinship Local Offer. Improving Lives Select Commission scrutinised the Kinship Local Offer on 17th June 2025 prior to Cabinet approval and recommended that an update was presented to Improving Lives after the first annual review of the Kinship Local Offer.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Lives Select Commission note the progress made in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer.

Background Papers

1. [Cabinet Report 07.07.25 - Kinship Local Offer](#)
2. [Appendix 1 - Kinship Local Offer](#)

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Update on Kinship Local Offer

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2024, the Government issued statutory guidance on 'Kinship Care', which included a definition of kinship care: 'any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term'. This covers a wide span from informal arrangements and private fostering to Children in Care fostered by family or friends, and children subject to Court orders proving their family or friends with parental responsibility.
- 1.2 The October 2024 statutory guidance requires each local authority to publish a Kinship Local Offer. A senior manager must be nominated to ensure the kinship local offer meets statutory requirements and that it is responsive to the needs of kinship children and their carers. It also extends the role of the Virtual School Head to champion the attainment, attendance and progress of children in kinship care, and extends the role of the Virtual School to provide advice and information to kinship carers. The requirement to publish the Kinship Local Offer was enshrined in primary legislation through Clause 5 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.
- 1.3 In July 2025, Cabinet approved the publication of the Council's Kinship Local Offer. The Kinship Local Offer was adapted to be an interactive, online offer which was made available online in October 2025. This report outlines the progress in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer to date.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Kinship Care Delivery Group (KCDG)

The named senior manager to lead the Kinship Local Offer, Chris MacDonald, chairs the Kinship Care Delivery Group, a bimonthly multi-agency working group which reports into the Family Help Partnership Group, chaired by the Service Director for Family Help, Kelly White. The Family Help Partnership Group reports into the Families First Delivery Group, which is chaired by Executive Director for Children's Services, Nicola Curley.

- 2.2 The Kinship Care Delivery Group includes organisations from across different services, such as:
 - Locality in Children's Social Care – where many kinship arrangements are first made.
 - Integrated Front Door in Children's Social Care where Kinship Navigators are based.
 - Family Help – where kinship families receive a universal and/or targeted service.
 - Fostering – where kinship foster carers are supported including under Regulation 24 (Reg 24) of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 which allows local authorities to immediately place a child with a family member or friend (a connected

person) as a temporary foster carer, even if they haven't been formally assessed as foster carers yet

- Empower – where kinship families experiencing acute instability receive interventions and Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund applications are made.
- Virtual School – where there is a duty to advance the educational attainment of kinship carers.
- Education Safeguarding Lead – recognising many kinship children experience additional barriers to achieving in school, and some kinship children may go undetected initially.
- Access to Education – recognising some kinship children have priority in applying for schools and that exclusions are elevated for kinship children.
- Early Years – recognising that the importance of early years education is increased for kinship children who may experience change and upheaval before starting in nursery/early years provision.
- SEND – recognising that kinship children are over-represented in the cohort of children with SEND.
- Housing Options – recognising some kinship carers report barriers or challenges in caring for kinship children due to space.
- Integrated Care Board (ICB) Safeguarding – recognising that kinship children are more likely to have health needs and require NHS commissioned services, and kinship carers are more likely to have chronic health needs and/or a disability.
- Looked After Nurse – where many kinship children begin their journey towards a kinship arrangement, or within a kinship arrangement.
- The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT)– recognising that there are many kinship children who receive a universal or targeted health offer within 0-19.

2.3 The objectives of Kinship Care Delivery Group are:

- a. To coordinate activity to support kinship carers between services within the Council and between partner agencies.
- b. To ensure compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including the requirement to publish and maintain a Kinship Local Offer with multi-agency input.
- c. To promote the well-being and stability of children in kinship care arrangements, closing the gap on educational attainment, health outcomes or any other areas of adversity or disadvantage.
- d. To establish pathways to access resources, training, and support for kinship carers.
- e. To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of services which kinship carers use and make recommendations for improvement.

2.4 **Progress against the objectives in the workplan**

The Kinship Local Offer was promoted to the public and professionals:

- Posters up in schools, Family Hubs and GPs

- Presentation at all Council forums and targeted internal forums
 - Spotlight on Council's intranet
 - Presentation at targeted partner agency forums, reaching Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools, headteachers
 - Spotlight on partner agency intranet, including NHS, all Family Hubs partners and all schools' communication
- 2.5 Kinship Navigators placed within MASH have been able to be a single point of contact for all kinship carers, responding to enquiries with the option of a home visit and ensuring kinship families understand and can access the support available. The kinship support groups have been maintained at a fortnightly frequency, with a number of guests who routinely attend to share what their services offer, and to co-develop kinship pathways. This includes:
- Early Years – introducing the childcare offer and Early Years connections, including to specialist teachers.
 - Virtual School – introducing both Virtual School headteachers for strategic oversight of kinship children's attainment and outcomes and offering drop-in and ad hoc advice and support.
 - Best Start Family Hubs – introducing outreach, Peep (Learning Through Play) programme, parenting courses, universal youth work offer and other services within the Family Hubs.
 - Talking Therapies – introducing the therapies available via Talking Therapies and exploring group-based CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).
- 2.6 A five week introductory course covering trauma, safety and attachment is run through the Empower service for kinship carers on a constant rolling basis. All new kinship carers known to the service are invited to attend and it acts as a forum to meet fellow kinship carers.
- 2.7 A single form of assessment and support plan, known as the Form K and produced by Coram-BAAF, was introduced in October 2025 for kinship assessments for approval as a foster carer for a specific child, Child Arrangements Orders and Special Guardianship Orders. This has reduced duplication for families and professionals.
- 2.8 Early Years have also strengthened the offer for kinship children, who are most represented in the 1-4 age bracket at the time of making a Court order and are more likely to be identified as having SEND, through a focus on kinship children in the 0-5 SEND Pathway multi-agency meeting. This will support early identification of emerging SEND.
- 2.9 Kinship children and their educational experiences are tracked using data on suspensions, exclusions, SEND and attendance. The s175 safeguarding self-assessments which schools complete annually now include a prompt about recognising and supporting kinship children.
- 2.10 Kinship children were included in eligibility criteria for Healthy Holidays scheme, entitling school aged children to free holiday clubs.

2.11 Kinship families are referred to Housing Assessment Panel for discretionary decision-making about priority whenever there is an evident housing need resulting from the additional child(ren) in the household. Adaptations to case management systems in Housing will also allow tracking of kinship arrangements as of December 2025.

2.12 The Empower service, who work with kinship families with acute instability and make applications to source therapy through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, has two FTE posts equivalent for kinship families and has been able to provide wraparound support to kinship families in crisis.

2.13 **Challenges**

Recruitment of the Kinship Navigators, who are based and line managed within the MASH, has experienced some challenges. This has not impacted on the ability to respond to enquiries but the changes in personnel have slowed progress on the desire achievement of the developmental work.

2.14 **Priorities for the next twelve months**

Check-ins: Kinship Navigators will operate a model of annual check-ins with all kinship carers, including those who have not approached us for support, to minimise barriers to seeking help. The Navigators have begun with kinship children approaching the Primary to Secondary transition in September 2026.

2.15 Training: To build on sessions on the Kinship Local Offer, a programme of training across Family Help and Children's Social Care will seek to grow kinship literacy in the workforce. There will also be sessions open to partner agencies to better understand kinship.

2.16 Support groups: To expand the support group offer based on work with kinship carers to establish what would help most. Whether there is sufficient need for groups in other areas of the borough is being explored.

2.17 Parenting support: To develop a parenting programme specifically for kinship carers to complement the five week introductory course. To exploring how to ensure all kinship children are flagged within NHS systems for 0-19 health services.

2.18 Educational outcomes: A multi-agency audit of fixed term exclusions for kinship children is planned for Autumn Term, in order to identify any opportunities for earlier identification and intervention. The data is tracked and considered in KCDG termly.

3. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 Members are asked to note the progress made in developing and implementing the Kinship Local Offer.

Accountable Officer(s)

Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, CYPS

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Executive Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	12/05/26
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	19/05/26

Report Author:

Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, Children & Young People's Services
chris.macdonald@rotherham.gov.uk

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

Kinship Local Offer: Improving Lives Select Commission June 2026

**Chris MacDonald,
Head of Safeguarding, CYPS**

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Kinship Local Offer

DfE definition of kinship care:

‘any situation in which a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term’.

DfE Oct 2024 ‘Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance’ requires that we:

- Nominate senior officer as lead for kinship.
- Publish and regularly review our Kinship Local Offer.
- Offer family group decision making to all families before care proceedings.
- Virtual School to nominate officer for educational outcomes for children in kinship care arrangements.

Kinship Local Offer

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 makes publishing Kinship Local Offer a legal requirement.

RMBC's Kinship Local Offer scrutinised at ILSC June 2025 and approved by Cabinet July 2025.

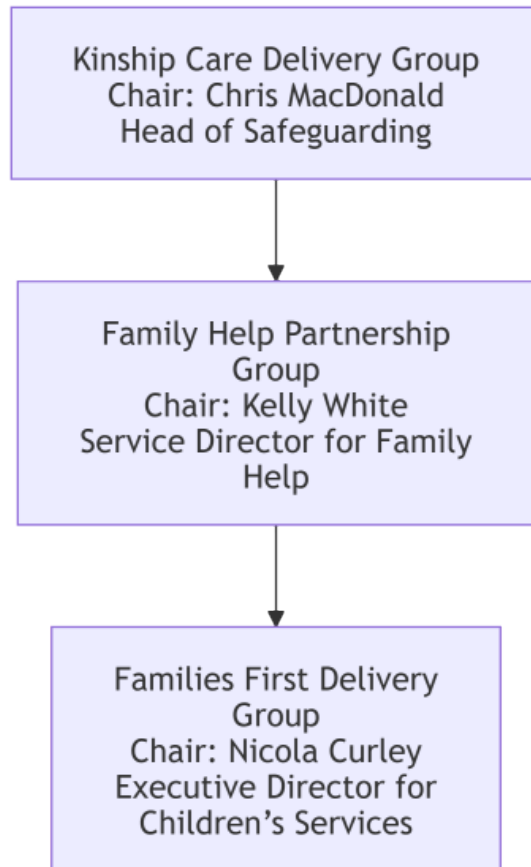
ILSC overseeing progress 12 months on.

Kinship Local Offer

The Kinship Local Offer is expected to include:

- Support groups and training.
- Financial support.
- Help to stay in work.
- Accommodation.
- Education.
- Supporting family time.
- Family group decision making.
- Legal support.
- Therapeutic support.

Kinship Care Delivery Group



- To coordinate activity to support kinship carers between services within the Council and between partner agencies.
- To ensure compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including the requirement to publish and maintain a Kinship Local Offer with multi-agency input.
- To promote the well-being and stability of children in kinship care arrangements, closing the gap on educational attainment, health outcomes or any other areas of adversity or disadvantage.
- To establish pathways to access resources, training, and support for kinship carers.
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of services which kinship carers use and make recommendations for improvement.

Kinship Care Delivery Group

Chair:
Kinship Lead

Education:
Virtual School
Early Years
SEND
Access to
Education
Education
Safeguarding
Lead

Health:
ICB
Child in Care
Nurse
TRFT

Children's
Social Care:
MASH
Locality
Fostering

Safeguarding
Empower
IROs

Family Help:
Family
Support

Housing:
Housing
Options

Progress

- The Kinship Local Offer was promoted to the public and professionals in a variety of settings and forums.
- Kinship Navigators placed within our MASH have been able to be a single point of contact for all kinship carers.
- Our Empower service has two 1FTE posts equivalent for kinship families and has been able to provide wraparound support to kinship families in crisis.
- The kinship support groups have been maintained with a number of guests who routinely attend to share what their services offer, and to co-develop kinship pathways.
- A five week rolling introductory course covering trauma, safety and attachment is run through our Empower service for kinship carers.
- A single form of assessment and support plan introduced.
- Kinship children were included in eligibility criteria for Healthy Holidays scheme.
- Focus on kinship children in the 0-5 SEND Pathway multi-agency meeting.

Next 12 months

- Check-ins: Kinship Navigators will operate a model of annual check-ins with all kinship carers, including those who have not approached us for support, to minimise barriers to seeking help.
- Training: To build on sessions on the Kinship Local Offer, a programme of training across Family Help and Children's Social Care will seek to grow kinship literacy in the workforce.
- Support groups: To expand the support group offer based on work with kinship carers to establish what would help most.
- Parenting support: To develop a parenting programme specifically for kinship carers to complement the five week introductory course.
- Educational outcomes: A multi-agency audit of fixed term exclusions for kinship children is planned for Autumn Term, in order to identify any opportunities for earlier identification and intervention.

Thank you

Chris MacDonald
Head of Safeguarding & Kinship Lead

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 09 June 2026

Report Title

Experts at Hand (EAH) – Rotherham SEND Reform and Inclusion Model

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley – Executive Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

Report Author(s)

Niall Devlin - Service Director, Education and Inclusion
01709 254235 or niall.devlin@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The School's White paper (2026) required all Councils to build an Experts at Hand (EAH) multi-disciplinary teams for children and young people aged 0 to 25 years of age. The EAH teams should include educational psychologists, specialist teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and local special schools. This report provides an overview of the development and implementation of the EAH model in Rotherham as part of the local SEND reform programme.

EAH proposal is a major change to how SEND support is delivered and aims to improve inclusion and outcomes. It introduces a new multi-agency approach that provides support earlier and more consistently, reducing reliance on statutory processes and improving equity of access to specialist expertise.

The report outlines the national policy context, the rationale for system reform, and the specific design and delivery model being implemented in Rotherham. It also sets out the expected impact of the model, including improved inclusive practice, better attendance and engagement, and more sustainable demand across the SEND system.

Recommendations

1. The ILSC review the EAH delivery model and provide advice on implementation and delivery.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Glossary of Terms

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Experts at Hand (EAH) – Rotherham SEND Reform and Inclusion Model

1. Background

- 1.1 The SEND system is being reformed at a national level following the publication of the Schools' White Paper (2026) and associated consultation.
- 1.2 Central to this reform is the introduction of the Experts at Hand model, supported by £1.8 billion investment over three years, aimed at improving early intervention and mainstream inclusion. Locally that will be an investment in the region of £2.2 million in the first year. At least 80% of funding must be spent on EAH direct delivery for all settings, staff and their children and young people.
 - No more than 10% of funding can be spent on admin costs for delivering the EAH offer.
 - No more than 10% of funding can be spent on local authority transformation costs, including staff or other associated costs.
- 1.3 The aim is to ensure children and young people with SEND receive timely, high-quality support within mainstream settings wherever possible, reducing the need for escalation to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and specialist placements.
- 1.4 The Experts at Hand model provides a new route for education settings to access specialist advice and support from education and health professionals. It focuses on improving how whole schools and settings support children, rather than mainly working with individuals. This reflects a national shift toward an early help, capacity-building model, where mainstream provision is better equipped to meet a wider range of needs.
- 1.5 There is a range of specialist services in Rotherham that currently supports children and young people across early years, schools and post-16 provision in Rotherham, including educational psychology, specialist teaching, therapy services, and targeted programmes such as SEMH outreach and mental health support.
- 1.6 While there is a strong universal infrastructure, access to specialist support is uneven. A significant proportion of capacity is focused on statutory activity or delivered through traded models, which can limit consistent access, particularly for early intervention in mainstream settings.
- 1.7 There is also a clear imbalance across phases, with stronger provision for school-age children and more limited support in early years and post-16, particularly into adulthood.
- 1.8 Overall, the current system is characterised by:
 - capacity tied up in statutory processes
 - variability in access to early intervention
 - reliance on traded services

- reduced support beyond age 16

1.9 The EAH model builds on existing strengths in partnership working while addressing these challenges, improving equity of access, strengthening early intervention, and supporting more consistent inclusive practice across the system.

2. Key Issues

2.1 While many schools demonstrate strong inclusive practice, access to specialist expertise can be improved, particularly in early years and post-16 provision.

2.2 Existing specialist services are often constrained by structural factors. For example, a significant proportion of educational psychology capacity is focused on statutory work at the point a child needs an EHC plan, and much specialist teacher support operates through traded models, limiting equitable access. This creates pressure on the system and limits early intervention.

2.3 The Experts at Hand Model in Rotherham

2.3.1 The EAH model introduces a new, non-statutory, consultation-based approach to accessing multidisciplinary expertise. It is additional to existing services and does not replace statutory duties or EHCP provision.

2.3.2 The model prioritises whole-setting, group-level and workforce development activity. This includes consultation, training, coaching, modelling and environmental adaptation to improve inclusive practice at scale.

2.3.3 Delivery is through multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), including educational psychologists, specialist teachers, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists, working collaboratively to provide coherent, education-focused support.

2.4 An example of how the EAH Model can Work:

2.4.1 A school notices that many children are struggling with speech, language and communication.

2.4.2 In response, a small team of specialists (for example a speech and language therapist, educational psychologist, occupational therapist and specialist teacher) visit the school. They spend time looking around lessons, reviewing what is taught, and understanding what support the school already provides.

2.4.3 After this visit, the team gives the school clear, practical advice. This might include:

- simple changes to make the school more communication-friendly
- ideas to adapt lessons so all children can access them
- training for teaching assistants so they can deliver speech and language support

- tips to manage sensory needs so children feel calmer and ready to learn

2.4.4 The team may also provide training for staff and help turn their advice into everyday classroom activities.

2.4.5 Importantly, the support doesn't stop there. The team comes back to check how things are going, help staff refine their approach, and see what difference it is making for children.

2.5 **Expected Impact**

2.5.1 The EAH model changes how and when specialist support is provided to schools. By providing support earlier into mainstream settings, the early years and Post-16 colleges, the model changes the response to emerging SEND needs. Instead of escalation towards statutory assessment. Schools gain timely access to multidisciplinary consultation, modelling, training, advice and coaching that strengthens their ability to act early and confidently.

2.5.2 This approach is expected to change how schools respond to SEND needs, not just the support they provide. Having the EAH model being consultation-based, time-limited and actively monitored will avoid becoming just another referral system. The emphasis on whole-setting and MAT-level work, combined with proactive deployment informed by system data, means capacity is directed where needs are greatest. As a result, the EAH model is expected to contribute to school meeting the needs of children at SEND Support, improved attendance and inclusion for key cohorts, and greater confidence among families that support can be secured early. This represents a shift from managing pressure within the SEND system to shaping demand through earlier, better-supported mainstream inclusion, which is central to long-term sustainability.

2.6 **The Model**

2.6.1 The EAH model will be delivered through a coordinated multidisciplinary team, bringing together education and health expertise into a single, coherent offer for schools and settings.

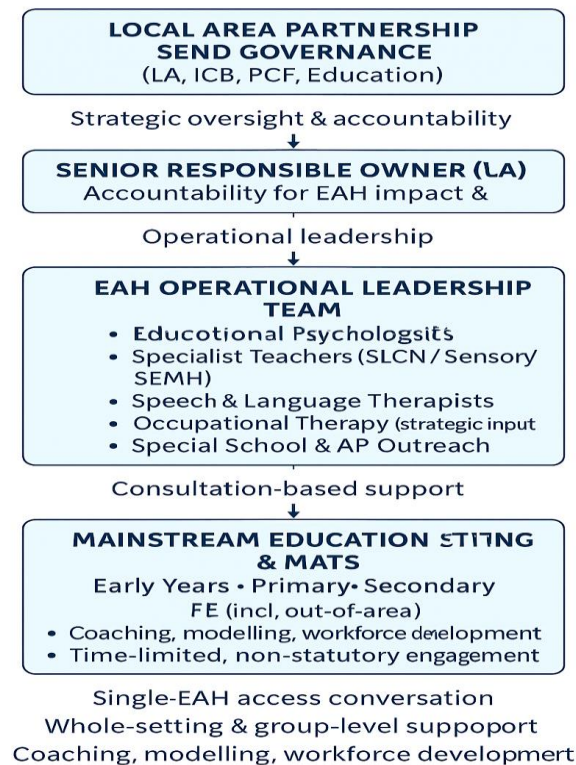
2.6.2 At its core, the model will include:

- Educational Psychologists providing consultation, assessment-informed advice, and system-level support
- Specialist Teachers supporting inclusive practice across a range of needs
- Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists contributing clinical expertise to improve communication, sensory and functional outcomes
- A small leadership and coordination function to oversee delivery, deployment and performance

- 2.6.3 The team will operate as a single, integrated service, working collaboratively with education providers to deliver consultation, training, coaching and modelling. Support will be deployed flexibly, based on identified need and system priorities, rather than through individual referrals.

2.7 Delivery and Governance

- 2.7.1 EAH in Rotherham will be delivered through a local authority-led, jointly commissioned model with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), ensuring shared accountability across education and health.



- 2.7.2 The local authority acts as system convenor, with responsibility for equity, quality and value for money.
- 2.7.3 Governance is provided through Local Area Partnership arrangements, with a Senior Responsible Owner accountable for delivery and impact.
- 2.7.4 Operational leadership is supported by a dedicated Programme Manager responsible for coordination, deployment and performance monitoring.
- 2.7.5 Delivery is guided by a clear performance framework, including measures of coverage, timeliness, balance of activity and system impact.
- 2.7.6 Implementation is structured through parallel workstreams covering governance, workforce, access, delivery and monitoring, enabling pace while maintaining system control.
- 2.7.7 The model is being implemented in phases, beginning with priority cohorts and localities, and scaling over time based on learning and impact.

2.8 Implementation, Monitoring and Learning

2.8.1 In 2026/27, the partnership will prioritise establishing MDT capacity, publishing clear operating principles and access arrangements, and phased deployment starting with priority localities and cohorts.

2.8.2 Delivery of EAH will be monitored through a clear performance framework, including measures of coverage, equity of access, timeliness of response, balance of activity and contribution to wider system outcomes. Activity will be reviewed termly to ensure EAH remains focused on preventative, capacity-building support and does not replicate referral-led or statutory models. Learning from delivery will inform ongoing refinement of the offer over the three-year reform period.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option 1 – Phased Implementation with Priority Cohorts (Recommended)

3.1.1 Adopt a phased rollout of the EAH model, beginning with priority localities, phases (e.g. Early Years and Post-16), and cohorts where demand pressures and inclusion challenges are greatest, before scaling borough wide.

3.1.2 Advantages:

- Enables targeted use of resource where need and impact is highest
- Supports controlled implementation and learning before scaling
- Reduces risk of overwhelming workforce capacity in year one
- Aligns with current plan for staged delivery

3.1.3 Disadvantages:

- Some schools/settings may experience delayed access
- Perception of inequity during early phases if not clearly communicated

3.2 Option 2 – Universal Light-Touch Offer with Targeted Intensification

3.2.1 Provide a universal baseline EAH offer to all settings (e.g. training, consultation access), alongside enhanced multidisciplinary support for identified priority settings or cohorts.

3.2.2 Advantages:

- Ensures all schools have some level of access from the outset
- Balances equity with targeted impact
- Helps build system-wide understanding of the model

3.2.3 Disadvantages:

- Risk of diluting impact if resource is spread too thinly
- May limit depth of support in highest-need areas

3.3 Option 3 – Locality-Based Delivery Model

3.3.1 Deploy EAH teams aligned to defined localities or clusters (e.g. family hub footprints or school partnerships), with responsibility for population-level outcomes.

3.3.2 Advantages:

- Strengthens partnership working at a local level
- Enables better alignment with Family Help and Best Start priorities
- Improves understanding of community need and context

3.3.3 Disadvantages:

- Potential variation in delivery between localities
- Requires strong coordination and performance management

3.4 Option 4 – Centralised Deployment Based on System Data

3.4.1 Operate a centrally coordinated model where EAH deployment is directed based on real-time data (e.g. EHCP trends, exclusions, attendance, Ofsted outcomes).

3.4.2 Advantages:

- Maximises impact on key system pressures
- Supports strategic demand management (e.g. EHCP growth)
- Ensures resources are dynamically allocated

3.4.3 Disadvantages:

- May feel less responsive to individual school requests
- Requires strong data infrastructure and transparency

3.5 Option 5 – School-Led Access within a Managed Framework

3.5.1 Allow schools to request EAH support (within defined thresholds and criteria), with prioritisation managed centrally to maintain focus on early intervention and system impact.

3.5.2 Advantages:

- Empowers schools and increases ownership
- Likely to build positive engagement and trust
- Responsive to emerging needs in real time

3.5.3 Disadvantages:

- Risk of demand-led pressure shifting model toward referral behaviour
- May disadvantage schools with less confidence/capacity to engage

3.6 Recommended Approach

3.6.1 Option 1 (Phased Implementation with Priority Cohorts), combined with elements of **Option 4 (data-informed deployment)**, is recommended.

This approach:

- Aligns with the current planned phased delivery and system reform journey
- Ensures resources are focused where they will have greatest impact on inclusion and demand
- Provides a structured route to scale while embedding learning and managing risk

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Consultation of the EAH model was included in the consultation and engagement of the Local Areas SEN Reform Plan. This includes:

- The SEND and AP Strategic Partnership Board (which includes Early Years, School and Post-16 education providers, Social Care and Health Partners, Local Authority Officers, and Parents).
- The SEND and AP Executive Board
- The Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership (forum where Multi-Academy Trust, LA officers, LA maintained schools meet)
- A summit that brought together Parents, Social Care and Health partners

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Implementation of EAH will take place over a three-year reform period beginning in 2026/27.

5.2 Initial priorities include establishing governance arrangements, recruiting and deploying multidisciplinary teams, and publishing clear access arrangements.

5.3 Delivery will begin in priority areas during the first year, with progressive scaling across all phases and settings.

5.4 Performance will be monitored termly through a defined framework, with accountability sitting within Local Area Partnership governance and oversight by the Senior Responsible Owner.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications outlined in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications outlined in this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 HR must be consulted for advice on any potential implications of staffing.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 EAH will improve early support, inclusion and outcomes, ensuring more children can access support without escalation to EHCPs.
- 9.2 The Experts at Hand model is expected to have a significant positive impact on children and young people, particularly those with SEND.
- 9.3 By improving early intervention and strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream settings, children will be better supported to access their education, achieve positive outcomes, and remain within their local communities.
- 9.4 The model will also help reduce inequalities by ensuring more equitable access to specialist expertise, regardless of setting or background.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 The Experts at Hand (EAH) model is expected to have a positive impact on equality of access to support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. By strengthening early intervention and improving access to specialist expertise within mainstream settings, the model aims to reduce disparities in access to support that can arise from differences in school resources, awareness or ability to navigate statutory processes.
- 10.2 The model promotes inclusive practice and supports the Council in fulfilling its Public Sector Equality Duty by advancing equality of opportunity for children and young people with SEND. By focusing on whole-setting approaches, workforce development and environmental adaptations, the model seeks to remove barriers to participation, learning and engagement, particularly for those who may otherwise be at risk of exclusion or underachievement.
- 10.3 The EAH approach aligns with human rights principles, including the right to education and the right to participate fully in community life. By enabling more children and young people to be supported effectively within their local mainstream settings, the model supports their right to inclusion and reduces reliance on more restrictive or segregated provision, where appropriate.
- 10.4 There is a potential risk that, during phased implementation, access to the EAH offer may vary between settings or localities. This will be mitigated through clear access criteria, transparent communication, and ongoing monitoring of equity of access and impact across different groups and communities.
- 10.5 Equality considerations will be kept under review throughout implementation, with data used to monitor outcomes for different groups (including by disability, age, and socio-economic background). This will ensure that the model continues to promote fairness, reduce inequalities and respond to any unintended differential impact.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 The Experts at Hand (EAH) model is not expected to have a significant direct impact on CO₂ emissions or climate change. The model primarily focuses on service delivery reform through workforce deployment, training, and consultation within existing education and health infrastructure.
- 11.2 There may be minor indirect impacts associated with travel by multidisciplinary teams visiting education settings. However, these will be mitigated through locality-based working, effective scheduling, and the use of virtual engagement, where appropriate, to reduce unnecessary travel.
- 11.3 The model aligns with broader Council sustainability objectives by promoting more efficient, coordinated delivery of services. By strengthening local provision and reducing the need for more intensive or out-of-area interventions over time, there is potential for a small positive environmental impact through reduced travel and system demand.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The model strengthens joint working between the Council, ICB and education providers, ensuring coordinated and effective delivery.
- 12.2 EAH is inherently partnership-based, requiring close collaboration between the Council, the Integrated Care Board, education settings, and specialist services.
- 12.3 Joint commissioning and shared governance arrangements will strengthen alignment between education and health, ensuring that expertise is deployed effectively and consistently.
- 12.4 The model also supports stronger system integration, aligning with wider initiatives such as Family Help and Best Start Family Hubs while avoiding duplication of provision.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There is a risk that EAH could be perceived as an alternative referral pathway, leading to demand pressures and dilution of its intended purpose. This will be mitigated through clear operating principles, consultation-based access, and active monitoring of activity balance.
- 13.2 There is also a risk related to workforce capacity and recruitment, particularly in specialist roles.
- 13.3 This will be addressed through phased implementation, use of existing capacity, and strategic workforce development, including the introduction of advanced practitioner roles.

Accountable Officer(s)

Niall Devlin – Service Director, Education & Inclusion

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Stuart William – On behalf of Nicola Curley	26/05/26
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	Click here to enter a date.

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

Appendix 1: Experts at Hand (EAH) – Rotherham SEND Reform and Inclusion Model

Glossary of Terms

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

NHS services that support children and young people with emotional, behavioural and mental health needs.

Consultation-Based Approach

A way of working where specialists advise and support staff (e.g. teachers) to improve practice, rather than working directly with individual children as the main approach.

EAH (Experts at Hand)

A national SEND reform model bringing together education and health specialists to support schools through early intervention, training and advice.

EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan)

A legal document outlining a child or young person's special educational needs and the support required to meet those needs.

Early Intervention

Providing support at the earliest stage of a child or young person's needs to prevent issues from becoming more complex.

Educational Psychologist (EP)

A specialist who supports learning, behaviour and emotional wellbeing, often advising schools on how best to meet children's needs.

Equality Act 2010

Legislation that protects people from discrimination, including children and young people with disabilities or SEND.

ICB (Integrated Care Board)

The NHS organisation responsible for planning and funding health services locally.

Inclusion

Ensuring that all children and young people, including those with SEND, are supported to learn, participate and achieve within mainstream settings wherever possible.

Local Area Partnership

The group of organisations (Council, NHS, schools and others) working together to deliver services for children and young people with SEND.

Mainstream Settings

Ordinary schools and education providers (not specialist schools).

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

A group of professionals from different backgrounds (e.g. education, health) working together to provide coordinated support.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

A health professional who supports children with physical, sensory or coordination needs to help them function in daily activities.

Post-16 Provision

Education or training for young people aged 16 to 25, such as colleges or sixth forms.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

A legal duty requiring public bodies to consider how their decisions affect people with protected characteristics and to promote equality.

SaLT (Speech and Language Therapist)

A specialist who supports children with communication, speech and language difficulties.

SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health)

A category of SEND relating to difficulties with behaviour, emotions and mental wellbeing.

Specialist Teacher

A teacher with additional expertise in supporting children with specific SEND needs (e.g. autism, learning difficulties).

Statutory Services / Statutory Duties

Services or responsibilities that the Council is legally required to provide.

Traded Services

Services that schools pay for directly, rather than being centrally funded and universally available.

Universal Provision

Support that is available to all children and young people as part of normal education provision.

With Me in Mind

A local mental health support service delivered in schools, focusing on early help for emotional wellbeing.

The Improving Lives Select Commission Terms of Reference- Revised 2025**All Scrutiny Commissions Functions-**

1. To carry out the annual overview and scrutiny work programme as agreed for each select commission with OSMB
2. To submit reports to OSMB with recommendations on matters that affect the borough or the inhabitants of the borough.
3. Within their terms of reference, each scrutiny commission may
 - a. scrutinise and review the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
 - b. question Cabinet Members and Chief Officers about their decisions and performance, in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
 - c. make recommendations to the Cabinet and appropriate Committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
 - d. review and scrutinise the performance of other partners and public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Committee and local people about their activities;
 - e. conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
 - f. question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent); and in liaison with OSMB, appoint non-voting co-optees to the Scrutiny Commissions and/or Task and Finish Groups.

Improving Lives Scrutiny Commission Specific Functions-

1. The Improving Lives Scrutiny Commission is tasked with carrying out in-depth overview and scrutiny as directed by the OSMB, including scrutinising-
 - a. Children's Safeguarding (including neglect, abuse, CSE and CCE) and prevention and early intervention strategies;
 - b. Family intervention, fostering, adoption and looked after children including out of borough placements;
 - c. Transitional arrangements from childhood to adulthood for young people with complex needs (with Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission);
 - d. Educational outcomes & 14-19 Strategy including early years, schools, SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) schools, and pupil referral units;
 - e. Home to School Transport;

- f. Early Help services including the Troubled Families agenda and youth provision;
 - g. Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) (with Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission as appropriate);
 - h. Domestic Abuse Strategy and response;
 - i. Expanding opportunities for skills and learning for young people.
- 2. For scrutiny of education issues, the appointment of statutory co-optees. Namely one representative of the Church of England Diocese (if the Council maintains one or more Church of England schools), Roman Catholic Diocese (if the Council maintains one or more Roman Catholic schools) and between 2 and 5 parent governor representatives. These members have voting rights in relation to education matters.

Improving Lives Select Commission – Summary Work Programme 2026-2027

Chair: Cllr Gina Monk

Vice-Chair: Donna Sutton

Governance Advisor: Natasha Aucott/Debbie Pons

Link Officer: Kelly White

The following principles were endorsed by OSMB at its meeting of 5 July 2023 as criteria to long/short list each of the commission's respective priorities:

Establish as a starting point:

- What are the key issues?
- What is the outcome that we want?

Agree principles for longlisting:

- Can scrutiny add value or influence?
- Is it being looked at elsewhere?
- Is it a priority – council or community?

Developing a consistent shortlisting criteria e.g.

- T: Time: is it the right time, enough resources?
- O: Others: is this duplicating the work of another body?
- P: Performance: can scrutiny make a difference?
- I: Interest – what is the interest to the public?
- C: Contribution to the corporate plan

Meeting Date	Responsible Officer	Agenda Item
09-Jun-26	Chris Macdonald	Kinship Local Offer Annual Update
	Niall Devlin	Expert at Hand Model (Linked to the SEND Reform Plan)
21-Jul-26	Helen Sweatton/Anne Hawk	CYPS Performance Annual Outturn Report (single item)
15-Sep-26	Niall Devlin	Rotherham SEND Reform Plan
	Helen Sweatton	CAMHS Update (Include HSC)
03-Nov-26	Kelly White	Families First Partnership Programme Update
	Nicola Curley	Schools White Paper
15-Dec-26	Helen Sweatton	No Family Left Behind Strategy Update (Family Prosperity Strategy)
09-Feb-27		

23-Mar-27		
04-May-27		

Potential Substantive Items for Scheduling

Potential Substantive Items for Scheduling		
TBC		Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Strategy – December Cabinet
TBC		LAC & CL Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 - Annual Update
TBC		SEND Strategy Update (include RPCF)
TBC		SACRE Annual Report
TBC		Neglect Strategy Update
TBC		CPPB Annual Report – March 2027
TBC		Fostering Transformation Action Plan Update
TBC		Child Exploitation Strategy 2023-2028 Update
TBC		Children Not In Education Annual Update
TBC		Domestic Abuse Strategy Progress Annual Update

Reviews for Scheduling

[illegible]

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

[illegible]

Items for Future Consideration

[illegible]