

ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Annual Assurance Report 2022/23



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
RSCP PRINCIPLES	3
CHAIR'S FOREWORD	4
WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM	5
GOVERNANCE	8
MASH	10
CHILD EXPLOITATION	12
LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT	17
PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE	20
SECTION II SELF-ASSESSMENT	23
INSPECTION	24
OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2023-24	27

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual assurance report from the Rotherham Safeguarding children partnership (RSCP) for the year 2022-2023. This annual report summarises the activity of the RSCP within the year and the assurance gained in relation to the safety of children in the Rotherham area. In line with statutory guidance (Working together to Safeguard children 2018), it:

- gives an overview and provides transparency about the activity undertaken by safeguarding partners between April 2022 and March 2023
- highlights how the safeguarding partners have committed to work together effectively in a multi-agency approach to identify where action can be taken to improve the services provided to children and their families
- provides assurance as well as identified areas for further development
- provides evidence of how the RSCP have worked together to deliver services to children and families effectively as the country moves out of the restrictions in place due to the Covid -19 pandemic

- gives an overview of the RSCP mission and strategy, the effectiveness of the governance structure and the functioning of the business unit, culminating in outline plans for 2023-24 and beyond.

The RSCP priorities set out in 2020 have continued to be themed under three key headings:

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

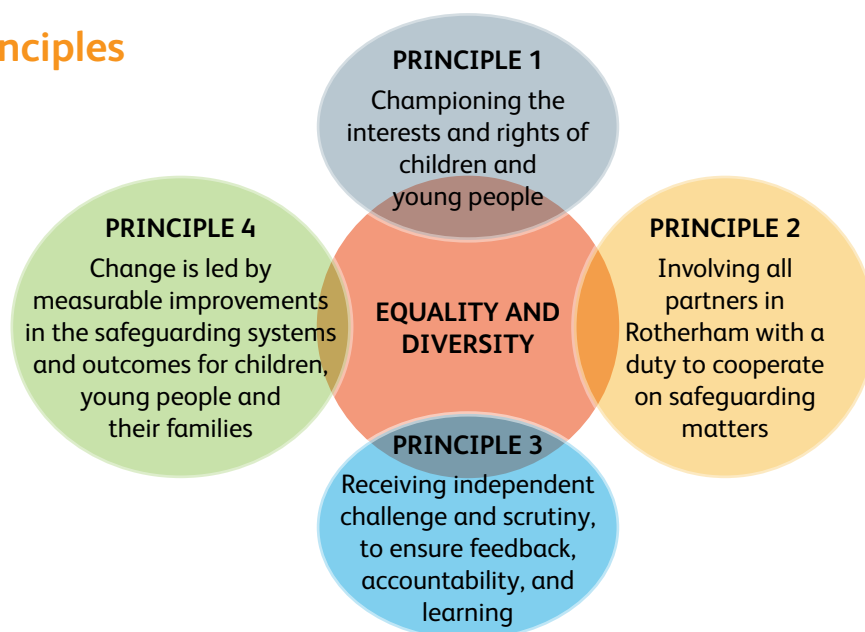
The above priorities were also informed by key principles which underpinned all activity undertaken by the partnership to safeguard promote the welfare of children in Rotherham as follows:

Chris Edwards, Chief Officer, NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive, Rotherham Council

Sarah Poolman, Assistant Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police

RSCP Principles



FOREWORD

from the RSCP Independent Chair – Darren Downs

It is a great pleasure to not only contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) annual report but to also be the independent chair of the partnership, taking on the role in early 2023, and I look forward to continuing to provide reassurance and scrutiny over the coming years.

The Annual Report 2022-23 reflects our commitment and achievements, as well as identifies areas where we need to continue to make improvements to ensure we meet the overarching priorities of being Safe at Home, Safe in the Community and having Safe Safeguarding systems. Since becoming the independent chair, I have been impressed by the strength and level of engagement across the partnership and the commitment and passion to safeguard our children and give them the best start in life.

The partnership has had some new members in the last year, and it is an ideal opportunity to thank those that have left the partnership for their work and commitment in recent years, as the position we are in now is in part due to their efforts. The year has seen more statutory inspections with South Yorkshire Police graded as “Outstanding” when it comes to protecting vulnerable people, and Rotherham’s Children Services graded as “Good” with specific reference to the proactive partnership approach through the EVOLVE, and ensuring a child focussed approach.

Rotherham has a large proportion of its population between 0-19 years of age, with 23.2% of people falling into that category, and nearly 51,000 below the age of 15. The concentration of children varies across the borough with some areas seeing 25% of their population aged between 0-15 years of age, which presents some challenges. The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan

(CPP) was 398 at year end, which is a significant reduction from 505 in July 2022, and a really positive sign. The vast majority of the CPPs relate to Emotional abuse, often linked to domestic abuse, and good evidence of the reasons for continued collaboration between the statutory boards and in particular the Rotherham Safer Partnership.

One area where further work is needed is addressing the disproportionate level of children from our minority communities on plans and cared for by the partnership, at 23% and 30% respectively, compared to 8.9% of the population. This, along with the work on understanding and reducing the volume of referrals entering the system and building relationships with children to strengthen their voice in all our activities, is key for next year’s activity.

As we move into the next year and plans are refreshed for the 2023-2036 period, I look forward to continuing to push the partnership to make positive improvements and give children the best start in life. Many of the previous projects and improvements such as EVOLVE, MASH, and MACE will all continue, and we look to strengthen services further with a focus on neglect and safeguarding in education.

Safeguarding Awareness Week this coming year will be hosted by Rotherham and is a key time to celebrate and promote the work that is taking place, improve relationships and increase the visibility of the services on offer and the work taking place, and I look forward to being involved in the week’s activities. We are also planning an annual learning event and conference in 2024 to continue to build on safeguarding week and work with our communities and most importantly young people to create a joined-up offer with their voice at its heart.

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM



Rotherham is a large minster town in South Yorkshire, England which along with its nearby settlements form the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham, with a population of 265,800 (ONS, 2021).

In Rotherham there are 61,600 0–19-year-old children living in the Borough (23.1 % of the local population – ONS, 2021). There has been a significant increase in the Eastern European Roma population (from Slovakia and Czech Republic since 2004 and Romania since 2014), concentrated in a few central neighbourhoods (Boston Castle, Rotherham East, and Rotherham West).

Further local and national demographics information tells us that:

23 % of children living in Rotherham are in low-income families (England 20 % – 2022).

Our Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement rate is above national average, 25.2 % compared to 23.1 % at Primary phase and 24.1 % compared to 20.9 % at Secondary phase (DfE 2021/22).

According to the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, deprivation in Rotherham has **increased** with the Borough now ranked **44th** most deprived district on average IMD score, compared to 52nd in 2015. Rotherham’s rank means that the Borough is amongst the 14 % most deprived local authority areas in England.

In 2019, the key drivers of deprivation in Rotherham remained **Health & Disability**, **Education & Skills**, and **Employment**. Of these, Health & Disability deprivation was most severe and widespread whilst Employment and Education deprivation were more concentrated and polarised. Health and Crime deprivation have

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

increased the most since 2015 according to the Indices.

20.1% of our school age population is from Black and Minority Ethnic background (BME) (England 36.1%) (DfE 2021/22).

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is claimed for 7.7% of children aged under 16 years in the local authority area compared with 5.3% in England as a whole.

The Borough is divided into 25 wards covering a wide diversity of urban, suburban and rural areas, covering an area of 110 square miles. Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Rotherham increased by 3.3%, from around 257,300 in 2011 to around 265,800 in 2021. Population growth for Rotherham was lower than the average for the Yorkshire and Humber region and roughly half of that for the UK.

23.2% of Rotherham's population are aged between 0-19 years. There are 50,900 children aged 0-15 in Rotherham and 26,100 young people aged 16-24. Whilst the majority get a good start in life, child poverty is highly polarised across the Borough and life chances can vary greatly. In the most deprived areas, 25% of the population are aged 0-15, but in the least deprived, the proportion is only 16%. Rotherham has a lower proportion of young people aged 18-24 than the national average due to young people moving elsewhere to study or work. In the 2021 census Rotherham saw Yorkshire and The Humber's joint third-largest percentage-point rise (alongside [Doncaster](#) and [Kirklees](#)) in the proportion of lone-parent households (from 10.7% in 2011 to 11.8% in 2021).

Rotherham is the 52nd most deprived district in England.

2022/23 (2021/22)	Rotherham	Statistical Neighbour Average	National Average
No of children subject of CP plans (per 10,000)	70.4 (82.7)	59.2	42.1
No of children looked after (per 10,000)	96.2 (97.8)	102.4	70.0

In Rotherham 398 children were subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan at the end of March 2023, whilst this is above statistical and national averages, but there is a downward trend from a high of 505 children in July 2022. There were 396 children subject to a CP plan as at 31 March 2023, broken into the following categories:

Category of Abuse	No
Emotional	210
Neglect	141
Physical	25
Sexual	18
Multiple	2

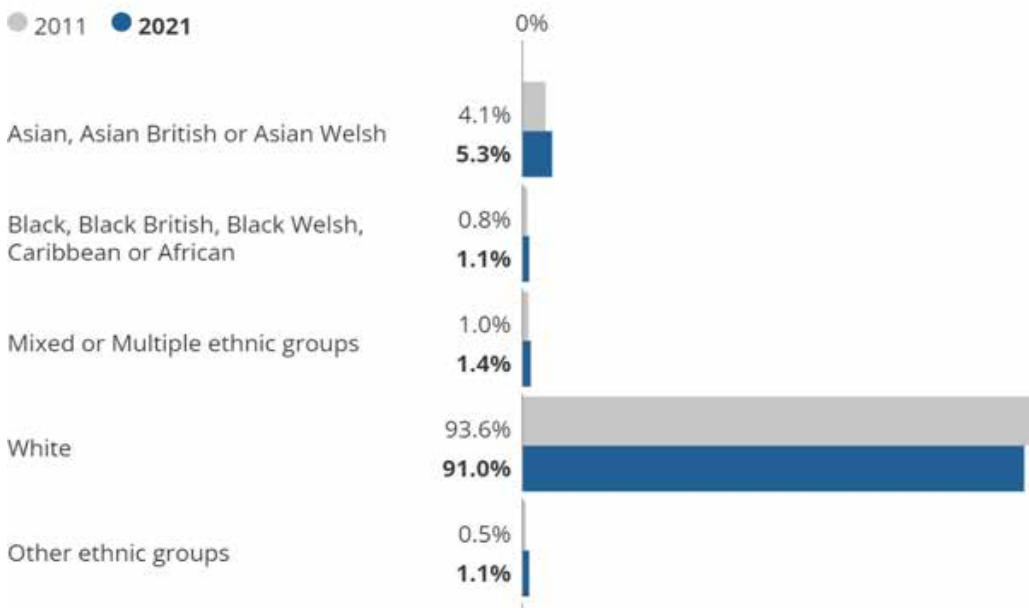
WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

It can be seen that the vast majority of CP plans are open due to Emotional Abuse – often linked to the impact of domestic abuse and neglect.

As the area moved out of the restrictions in place due to the Pandemic, there was a rise in children protection figures, possibly caused by more referrals and increased concern on children returning to school. However, the evidence appears to be that this small spike has subsided and that support to families in Rotherham is gradually reducing the number of children requiring protection or care. Behind this is a commitment to involving wider family members as early and effectively as possible, resulting in risk reduction being achieved, or children requiring removal for their safety being placed within their family. We have also seen a gradual reduction in care applications as children are supported to remain in the care of their families.

Equality and Diversity

Percentage of usual residents by ethnic group, **Rotherham**



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

The RSCP is mindful of the representation of children from minority ethnic/global majority backgrounds within statutory processes, and will be launching an equality, inclusion, and diversity strategy over the next 3-year period. For children on child protection (CP) plans and in our Care, it is evident that those from minority ethnic groups are overrepresented, with children from non-white backgrounds representing 23% of those subject to a CP plan and 30% of children in care. As a further example, children from a Gypsy/Roma background constituted 5.5% of those on CP plans and 8.1% of children in care compared to a population of 0.049% in the borough.

GOVERNANCE



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

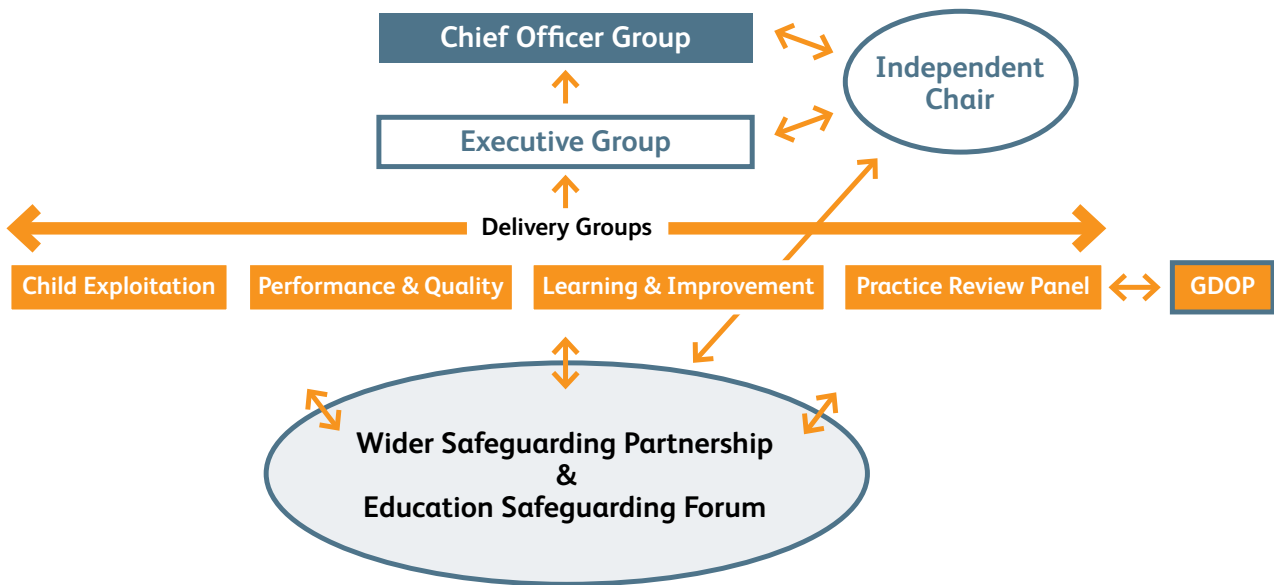
The Executive Group has undergone a membership change in 2022-23. The new membership includes Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, Laura Kosciwicz, Chief Superintendent and District Commander for Rotherham, Sue Cassin, Chief Nurse, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), alongside the new Independent Chair for the RSCP, Darren Downs. The RSCP Independent Chair Jenny Myers, left her role in October 2022, with Darren Downs taking up his role in March 2023. In addition, the new partnership business manager took up his role in mid-February 2023.

The Executive Group continues to set the strategic direction and priorities of the Partnership, which in turn are aligned with those of the Health & Wellbeing Board and Rotherham Safer Partnership. The three main partners made up of Rotherham Council, South Yorkshire Police and the Health organisations continue to work collaboratively with the wider partnership and the Voluntary Consortium. We continue to demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the voice of children and young people is at the heart of the safeguarding agenda in Rotherham.

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership has four Delivery Groups that lead on delivering the partnership assurance activities, innovation, improvements, learning and practice development. Each Delivery Group has a nominated chair and representatives from across the different multi-agencies that make up the partnership. In addition, the Executive Group has oversight of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

GOVERNANCE

Structure



Funding Arrangements

The Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership funding is provided by the three main statutory agencies. Management oversight for budget spend, is provided through the Partnership Executive Group by-monthly meetings.

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Funding	
Rotherham Council	£115,352
NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group	£115,352
South Yorkshire Police	£44,475
Totals Budget	£275,179

In May 2022, the MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub) moved from a position of a reliance on online referrals to a more restorative approach of telephone discussions. There are exceptions currently to this such as South Yorkshire Police, Youth Justice Service and night staff at the hospital, but this approach has been well received by most partners. Schools particularly welcome the opportunity to discuss potential referrals.

Senior management was strengthened within First Response with the introduction of an additional Service Manager post in March 2023. This has allowed for the line management of Evolve to move to First Response and for the development of a new Engage team to be established within their structure. Engage is being developed to work to a tightly defined remit to ensure that resources are targeted for those families most in need such as:

- Children who have been subject to Police Powers or this is likely to occur imminently.
- A family has requested Section 20 accommodation and support is required to prevent this.
- There has been a recent escalation in the family circumstances leading to a crisis which may result in family breakdown.

Engage will work in collaboration with young people and their families to identify solutions to problems and promote family:

- practical support to children and families such as support to medical appointments, school meetings and any other identified tasks such as support to improve home conditions.
- support to all family members during key times of tension, including mealtimes, night/morning routines and weekends.

- observation of family life to provide feedback and further guidance.
- convening and chairing a 'rapid' Family Network Meeting, as well as supporting ongoing referrals to Family Group Conferencing
- work with the family to develop a safety plan that all understand.
- engaging the young person/people in pro-social activities at key times of stress and support to access partner delivery to meet this need.
- developing bespoke parenting sessions
- explore support needs including access to parenting programmes.

As a result of positive feedback and impact in 2021-22, the Baby Clinic has continued to take place on a fortnightly basis. A positive review of the pilot found the following:

- it was working well, attendance was good and there was a positive commitment from midwifery services.
- Consent always gained from Mothers prior to any discussion at baby clinic as well as for any referrals resulting from the discussion.
- Generating good discussion leading to improved plans for Mothers and their babies.
- The richness of the discussions in baby clinic has highlighted some important issues such as late booking policy, and blanket policy for under 16-year-olds for wider discussion.
- Moved from a position of many babies being discussed at clinic initially to a more balanced approach.
- There is improved understanding in operational relationships between social care, midwifery and early help and a better understanding of each other's roles.

- Feedback from Maternity staff – they feel the relationship with the women is better as the outcome from baby clinic is a multiagency decision, and not just the midwife.

The review identified some areas for improvement:

- The baby clinic was set up as a temporary measure focusing on a particular area of practice. The richness of the discussions at the meeting are helping to shift practice and culture and as such the clinic will be open to review going forward.
- Terms of Reference has been amended to ensure that there is a supervisory discussion prior to baby clinic to prevent baby clinic being used as a supervision session. This needs to continue to be in place.
- Understanding and application of thresholds. At times, there continues to be a disconnect with health colleagues' threshold for risk of significant harm, which is not always in alignment with social care. At times, midwives have a worry about one aspect but from a social care perspective it may not be viewed as much of a worry (or that they are aware of mitigation for the worry).
- The hospital safeguarding team have been working on the threshold descriptors moving forward and feel things are better than they were, but improvement needs to continue.

CHILD EXPLOITATION



Rotherham’s 2019-2022 Strategy was developed by the multi-agency partnership under the auspices of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (RSCP). The strategy was published five years following the Jay report, whilst it was published after the national strategy, it follows key aims:

- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Children**
- **Support to Victims and Survivors**
- **Learning & Development**
- **Child Protection and Detection of Crime**

Progress and Achievements

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children - Responding to Child Exploitation

Achievements

- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is now included within the remit of Evolve alongside Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), creating a single Child Exploitation pathway. Additional resource was provided by the Council to increase staffing and this is now an effective service meeting the needs of all children and young people at risk of or subject to exploitation. Missing – Through positive work with children, residential homes, and foster carers the number of Children in Care who go missing has significantly reduced, alongside repeat episodes, with the year ending on the

CHILD EXPLOITATION

lowest number of Children in Care reported as missing throughout the year

- Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) are held to discuss children at risk of exploitation and to coordinate information regarding potential suspects and offenders. These meetings replaced the RAM – (Risk Assessment Management). The change brought Rotherham into line with national terminology ensuring that those in attendance at the meeting, including partners from across a regional border, understood the remit of the meeting.

Ongoing actions

- Preventative work is undertaken with regular high risk missing young people on a 1:1 basis to safeguard, provide intervention, build a relationship, and to look at diversionary activities through the provision of a dedicated advocate.

Support to Victims and Survivors - Post Abuse Support, Child Sexual Exploitation commissioned services for victims and survivors

Achievements

- Consultative referral pathway through the Trauma and Resilience Service (TRS) which is delivered through RDaSH and funded by the CCG (now ICB). Using this pathway, professionals can refer cases into these services, and TRS will allocate cases to the specific service above according to available capacity and specialisms

Ongoing actions

- Post Abuse Support, Child Sexual Exploitation commissioned services for victims and survivors. The service is an all-age service; however, this is predominantly to serve transition working as there is an internal pathway of support within the Council for under 18s

Learning & Development – Awareness Raising and Training

Achievements

- Annual Members Session - Introduction to Child Exploitation, tackling it in Rotherham
- Safeguarding Awareness Week (SAW) - Child Exploitation and County Lines training delivered by Rotherham Council and SYP - 31 events available to book onto with 615 staff across Rotherham registered attending. The Spot the Signs campaign was refreshed for Safeguarding Awareness Week (SAW21) in November 2021. Social media posts were shared via Rotherham Council and reached over 18,000 people, with over 400 people visiting the link provided in the posts to the Rotherham Council Child Protection web page
- The Evolve service continues to raise awareness through delivering of Child Exploitation training on a quarterly basis. In total we have trained 150 staff in the borough. In addition to this the team have attended team meetings, and a variety of schools to raise awareness
- A series of social media posts were also shared in the run up to Child Exploitation Awareness Day(18 March) highlighting how members of the public may see signs of exploitation in their everyday lives with links to local and national reporting mechanisms and support available.

CHILD EXPLOITATION

- Online harm and risk is a key concern regarding child exploitation. Training has been delivered to over 60 professionals, with the upcoming Safeguarding Awareness Week in November 2023 focusing specifically on online abuse including risk of exploitation
- Over the last 12 months we have continued to welcome both internal and external scrutiny into the processes and action we take to prevent those within our communities been and risk of, and subjected to child exploitation
- External inspections from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) grade SYP as 'outstanding' when it comes to protecting vulnerable people; specifically referencing our partnership approach
- Ofsted rate Rotherham's Children's Services as 'good', specifically referencing the proactive partnership approach through Evolve ensuring a child focused approach
- Internal scrutiny through Members, through SRP and through RSCP via reports, briefings, and scrutiny
- The Child Exploitation Delivery Group oversees Child Exploitation for the RSCP and has continued to look to develop our approach including devising a new workplan and a new data dashboard to give us a more nuanced understanding of how our actions are safeguarding children in Rotherham from exploitation
- Central to the work we do is the voice of the child, and we ensure that it is the golden thread that runs throughout all our work and meetings in this area



Ongoing actions

- The Evolve service continues to raise awareness through delivering Child Exploitation training on a bi-monthly basis

Child Protection and Detection of Crime - Operation Keep Safe and Operation Makesafe

Achievements

- Operation Keepsafe (explain) – Early Help and South Yorkshire Police led on Keepsafe Interventions in 2021 and 2022, including during SAW 2021 and 2022, across the Borough, and worked with approximately 1700 children and young people across the Rotherham Borough.
- Operation Makesafe is a national initiative that originated in South Yorkshire, about raising awareness of child sexual exploitation within the hotel & leisure industry. South Yorkshire Police have extended the approach to taxis, takeaways, and other vulnerable locations. The initiative focuses on training people working within these sectors to be aware of the early warning signs of CSE, encouraging them to report concerns to the police.
- Teams from Early Help Outreach and Engagement, Evolve, Evolve Police and Neighbourhood Police visited key target areas late at night to identify young people out and ensure their safety. Children and young people were returned home and a safe and well check undertaken, advice provided.
- Joint action with Rotherham Council community safety and licensing – overcoming challenges due to Covid-19 lockdowns. A staff training video was produced – with both public and private versions, in addition posters and literature supported the campaign. This was based upon the successful ‘Spot the Signs’ campaign.

- Operation Duxford was launched in February 2023, this consisted of visits to hotels in Rotherham, handing out posters/flyers and engaging with staff in these premises. The impact of this intervention will be documented and reviewed throughout 2023, and the operation will Identify any premises that require further engagement.

Ongoing actions

- Operation Keepsafe will continue to provide interventions jointly with the police to raise awareness and keep children in communities safe.
- Operation Makesafe will continue activities, including the launch of a new Operation Makesafe national training package. SYP and the Rotherham Council community safety team will continue to carry out engagement work with relevant premises to raise awareness of the signs of exploitation and what action to take should they have concerns, specifically.
 - March to May – training to be provided by police and Rotherham Council community safety. Engagement where appropriate with licensing, and any other agencies that may have an interest in the premises
 - May to August – Further engagement visits with hotels that have completed training, ensuring compliance and offering feedback to staff.
 - Engagement visits with all Rotherham hotels to be scheduled to provide updates on policy, new legislation, etc. To expand visits out to other premises, such as taxi companies, Air BNB’s, etc.

A new 3-year strategy for Child Exploitation will be launched by the RSCP in 2023.

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Independent Child Sexual Exploitation Review

The Independent Chair of Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership led an independent review of South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham Council's response to CSE in Rotherham. This followed the Council motion of 10 November 2021 responding to a Conservative briefing paper published on 3 November 2022.

The independent review, consisting of experienced experts in CSE and child safeguarding, published their findings on the 19 May 2022, and presented their report to Rotherham Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board on 27 May 2022.

Key findings of the CSE review were:

The response of the Rotherham Division of South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and the Council to information provided by the Conservative Councillors was effective and robust and that the specific allegations from the briefing paper were not founded.

SYP in Rotherham had a strong multi-disciplinary partnership approach to CSE and all the information provided by the Conservative Councillors was able to be tracked and where appropriate, action was taken.

No evidence was provided to support the claim that council staff said their managers told them not to talk about CSE or make reports about CSE.

Significant progress has been made in Rotherham in its response to CSE and that it has developed strong leadership, accountability and locally developed multi-agency relationships and scrutiny.

Rotherham has a strong CSE strategy. We found evidence that authorities are working effectively to keep children safe and not only are there robust performance frameworks and effective pathways for intelligence, but also areas of good practice.

However, there is always some learning and areas for improvement. Whilst the review is not making any firm recommendations it does make some suggestions for improvements, such as more detailed training for Councillors on local safeguarding systems and processes after being elected and the on-going need for SYP and Council to work to re-build public trust and confidence, which is likely to be required for a considerable time."

The review led to an enhanced response in relation to the support for staff regarding exploitation and improvements in the manner

in which our data influences and contributes to practice.

- A multi-agency task and finish group was developed to review the findings
- Induction and annual training on Child Exploitation for members, will continue after successfully running for two years
- Increased scrutiny and use of data – a data scorecard for scrutiny at partnership and Executive level.
- Rebuilding and developing trust and confidence through our ongoing media campaigns and awareness raising
- Positive engagement with survivors through our commissioned services and at operational level, keeping children and young people safe through our collective statutory and local responsibility at all levels.

LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

The RSCP continued to deliver a portfolio of training, consisting of face to face and online learning. We learnt from the Pandemic that a mix of online and face to face met differing needs and offered flexibility for trainers. As can be seen from the table below, attendance at training remained lower than re pandemic levels. This is not unique to Rotherham. There are several factors for this including the impact of the Covid pandemic in 2022, and staff capacity. Partner staff have received training and those attending the training below are new starters. For example, over 92% of TRFT staff working with children in family health services have received Level 3 safeguarding training. The partnership will seek continue to provide a diverse and responsive training offer to meet the workforce needs and keep it under review via our Practice and Learning delivery groups.

Date	Name of Course	Attendance
09/06/2022	Safer Recruitment	11
13/06/2022	Designated Safeguarding Leads	13
13/06/2022	LADO & Allegations Management	8
17/08/2022	Cumulative Harm & Childhood Neglect	6
22/08/2022	Child Exploitation & Contextual Safeguarding	14
24/08/2022	LADO and Allegations Management	4
27/09/2022	Safer Sleep	10
10/10/2022	LADO and Allegations Management	10
24/10/2022	Child Exploitation & Context. Safeguarding	11
01/12/2022	Cumulative Harm & Childhood Neglect	11
06/12/2022	LADO and Allegations Management	7
12/12/2022	Child Exploitation & Context. Safeguarding	13
11/01/2023	Barnardo's Training	15
24/03/2023	Barnardo's Training	24
24/03/2023	Barnardo's Training	24
Totals		157

We have continued to oversee responsibility for promoting a culture of continuous learning and practice improvement across the partnership via the Learning and Improvement group. The group meets quarterly and is responsible for the learning prospectus, alongside improvement and policy development. For 2023 onwards we will be seeking feedback from all training courses and following up on non-attendance, with senior managers being made aware if required, for example for non-attendees.

In 2022-23 the partnership adopted the 7-minute briefing approach to sharing wider learning and learning for quality assurance, local and national learning. This approach created a consistent method to dissemination of information in a familiar format, as this tool also used by partner organisations. We also found these bitesize learnings were a quick way to produce and disseminate information in a timely manner.

Rotherham's drive to continue to learn about the risk that exploitation poses to our children and young people, has been at the forefront of our specialist Evolve team completing exploitation workshops to 16+ Education providers, in-conjunction with workshops to the Head Teachers of Rotherham secondary schools. The Evolve team on a bi-monthly basis has provided workshops to professionals from Social Care, Early Help Schools, culminating in 150 participants in attendance.

Practice Standards Group

The Practice Standards Group sits within the scope of the Learning and Improvement Delivery Group and offers advice on how professionals work together between agencies to safeguard children, reporting to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Learning and Improvement Delivery Group. Standards are upheld with reference to relevant safeguarding procedures and practice guidance, and the standards of conduct set out by professional bodies.

The Group carries out Appraisals of situations where there has been cause for concern, but the criteria for Serious Incident Notification or Safeguarding Practice Review is not met, or where outstanding practice is recognised.

The Group also reviews and offers advice in cases where the Chair of a Child Protection Case Conference has exercised their power of veto to overturn a majority decision (Vetoes).

Activities and Achievements

a) Group Processes

The Group continually reviews how it works, seeking to maintain a high standard.

At the Annual review Meeting held in November 2022, the current Agency Representatives confirmed their willingness to continue in their roles, and the Chair and Deputy Chair both confirmed their willingness to continue in their roles. The Group passed Votes of Confidence in each Representative, the Chair, and the Deputy Chair.

b) Meetings and Referrals

The Practice Standards Group met 7 times, and received 5 Referrals:

- Four requests to review a Case Conference Chair's Veto, and one Appraisal

c) Vetoes

In all four cases the Case Conference Chair's decision was that the child(ren) should remain subject to Child Protection Planning. The Practice Standards Group agreed with the Case Conference Chair's veto in all four cases.

d) Appraisal

The Appraisal process looks at real 'case' examples and identifiers relevant learning. In this example there was a lack of information from agencies previously involved and poor communication between them. The primary themes that emerged were around information sharing, communication, disguised compliance and splitting of professionals.

e) Impact

The Practice Standards Group has presented outcomes to the Learning and Improvement Subgroup and has outputted:

- 7-Minute Briefings:
 - 'Hearing the Voice of the Child'
 - 'Working Together with Parental Conflict over Contact'
- Learning on a Page:
 - 'Working with Disguised Compliance and Splitting'

The Practice Standards Group features prominently within the Safeguarding Children Partnership website. This is where our outputs are lodged and made accessible.

f) Feedback

Following a Case Conference Chair's Veto, we received a response from the Chair who made the referral:

'Thank you for your response and rationale for why you think to uphold the veto decision. It's not always easy being in such a position, and always good to have oversight when a veto comes up'.

The Coming Year

- a) In the coming year, the Practice Standards Group will continue to work with the Rotherham Safeguarding Partnership, and partner agencies, to promote the principles of the Rotherham Family Approach in upholding practice standards and highlighting examples of outstanding practice.
- b) Following recent appointments to the Safeguarding Partnership Board, the Practice Standards Group will review representation of Education on the Group, ensuring the most appropriate Agency Representative is in place.
- c) The Group is currently exploring with the Child Death Overview Panel whether there may be a useful function in offering a space for reflective learning in some cases. If this function is adopted, the Group Terms of reference will be amended accordingly.
- d) The Practice Standards Group sections within the Safeguarding Children Partnership website are reviewed for accuracy and accessibility at each Group meeting. A major update and rationalisation of the Group's pages is planned in 2023.

PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE



The Performance and Quality Assurance Delivery Group has had considerable change. The work of the delivery group has been reviewed, and an annual plan of activity has been revised to ensure partners are able to come together to exert influence and provide appropriate challenge to each other, in keeping with workstreams of providers and commissioners. Recognition of the need for deeper challenge to endorse working in line with the key priorities has led to changes in membership of the group, and strengthened senior input, making challenge more effective. There has been a recognition that partners need to own their commitment to being responsive and adaptable, and as such the delivery group now seeks assurance via action plans; these are then scrutinised at the delivery group before sign off.

Regularity of meetings means that the group now has a deputy chair to ensure effective management of the activity; the interim partnership manager has recently been replaced on a permanent basis, allowing greater continuity of information flow between delivery groups as we review our objectives. Communication with the Executive Group continues to be strengthened to ensure the group is guided to facilitate its assurance role.

Audit activity is monitored and commissioned through the delivery group, and this has fed into the wider development plan of the partnership.

PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Joint Targeted Area Inspection

The RSCP agreed via the Executive Group to carry out an assurance exercise for a Joint Area Targeted Inspection (JTAI) to test readiness and resilience should the partnership be subject to an inspection under this framework. In keeping with recent JTAI activity the theme was focussed upon multi-agency processes linked to Early Help support and transitions to Social Care. The aim of this process was to test and make preparations for the following.

- The ability of all partners to respond to data set requests – such as Annex A information
- The capacity within the RSCP business unit to manage the process and store/share the data as required

- To test and manage the audit requirements of a JTAI, specifically in identifying the cohort of children and working with partners to complete 7 case file audits as required by JTAI inspectors. Three of these children would be identified for further ‘deep dive’ scrutiny by the partnership chair, acting as ‘Lead Inspector’
- To support partners in raising awareness of the JTAI process and to identify any learning outcomes in order to be more fully prepared for a full inspection

In summary this was a successful process, with key learning regarding process management and information sharing. The audit and deep dive work revealed several learning areas around practice and has directly informed action plans for 2023-24. Further consent assurance activity is planned for 2023-24.

Audit and Assurance

Audit activity is at the cornerstone of assuring our children and young people are safeguarded and delivering improvement. Partnership audits have been undertaken with a focus on:

CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5 WHO HAD SUSTAINED A PHYSICAL INJURY:

The scope of the audit included consideration of poverty and deprivation, a cohort of ‘accidental,’ ‘non-accidental’ and injuries referred to as ‘unexplained along with assurance a Strategy Meeting and Child Protection medical had taken place.

FINDINGS:

Strategy meetings and information sharing was timely, effective, and informed safety plans. The trajectory of plans would be improved through consistent holistic assessment and planning by all agencies.

Agencies should ensure the right support is being accessed by parents to create meaningful and sustainable change in their lifestyle choices and parenting.

A consistent approach should be developed to ensure the inclusion of fathers, as well as advocacy for fathers when working within a multi-agency approach.

PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

THE USE OF POLICE POWERS OF PROTECTION:

SCOPE:

To evaluate and assure that the use of Police Powers is appropriate in protecting children and young people. The follow up intervention by Children's Social Care and its partner agencies has been effective in safeguarding and keeping such children and young people safe.

FINDINGS:

The use and rationale for Police Powers was considered proportionate, SY Police understood the legislation and process. There was evidence of good quality early discussions between Police and Social care. Strategy Meetings were compliant with Working Together guidance; they were effective in developing safety planning and next steps.

The voice of the child was heard and understood. Learning included that Strategy Meetings must consider a child protection medical examination and any rationale for this not being held to be consistently recorded in the minutes.

Partners should ensure meeting conclusions and outcomes are routinely shared in a timely manner to offer assurance.

Partners should continue to develop assessment and support where neglect is identified as an enduring concern, using the NSPCC SHAREDD tool, GCP2 and knowledge of the Neglect Strategy updated 2022.

CHILD EXPLOITATION (CE)

SCOPE

The audit included an evaluation and assurance of the processes, pathways, and approach for identifying, assessing, and providing intervention to children and young people being exploited or at risk of exploitation in Rotherham.

FINDINGS

The audit found Clear evidence of multi-agency cooperation, management oversight and effective safety planning. Information sharing, missing protocols, MACE, and disruption processes (including NRM referral's) were shown to be well established and effective across the partnership.

Agencies' records reflect sound professional judgement and meet required standards.

Partners contribute meaningfully to assessments and comments and views are captured in young people's plans. Interventions are captured in assessments as is equality and diversity; this could be improved by recording in the young person's own words to reflect their lived cultural experience.

The knowledge and skills held by the Evolve (CE) Practitioners could be usefully shared with locality and partner practitioners to strengthen the whole system approach. Further work on engaging children with planning and contributing to their own safety plan would enhance the support and safety available.

SECTION II SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Section 11 Audit is designed to allow the RSCP/Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB) to assure itself that agencies placed under a duty to co-operate by this legislation are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare. Chapter 2 of Working Together (2018) details the common features which must be demonstrated by agencies in order to fulfil their commitment to safeguard children and promote the welfare of children.

In September 2022, the RSCP and the RSAB) collaborated on completion of section 11 reporting from Rotherham's statutory partners. The self-assessment challenge was framed around 2 central questions from WT 2018.

STANDARD 3 – There is a clear line of accountability within the organisation for safeguarding children and adults

STANDARD 5 – There is effective workforce development for staff and children in relation to safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children, adults and families depending on the agency's primary functions.

A challenge event was held with chairs of the safeguarding partnership (children) and board (adults), alongside attendance from statutory partners. Representation was made to this panel from RDaSH, TRFT, ICB, SYP, SYFR and Rotherham Council, with all agencies offering assurance in relation to the 2 questions posed.

Highlights included:

- Evident passion and enthusiasm from South Yorkshire Police in addressing child exploitation and a clear focus on the victim and capturing the child's voice
- Well established audit and PDR processes in Rotherham Council
- RDaSH engages in regular safeguarding supervision which can be done as a group supervision or one-to-one, every 3 months. Children & Adult staff have supervision together which has provided good feedback due to the mixture of staff
- SYFR provides 7-minute briefings, which are sent out through internal communications every week highlighting good case studies, positive reactions regarding safeguarding outcomes
- TRFT use health details to monitor, such as looking at reasons for attendances to Emergency Departments, attendances to appointments and reviewing referral mechanisms in supervision to gauge safeguarding for children. The Was-Not-Brought Policy is in place for Children, looking at bringing this in for Adults to be as comprehensive as possible.

Statutory partners continue to be subject to their own process of inspection and audit and there have been some considerable successes within the year 2022-23 as detailed below.

The Rotherham Foundation NHS Trust

[Link to: Trust - RFR The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust \(29/09/2021\) INS2-10689179691 \(cqc.org.uk\)](#)

The most recent inspection of TRFT was completed in May/June 2021. The trust was graded as Good in relation to services offered to Children and Young people. Specifically in the area of safeguarding it was found that:

The Trust set out a clear and ambitious 'safeguarding quality improvement plan' to address the significant concerns. The chief nurse identified completion of the action plan and next steps were to continue moving forward and build on these foundations. Some of these initiatives were very new and not fully embedded across the trust. These new initiatives included the 'Think Family' template which was incorporated into the Meditech records as part of all adults' assessments in the urgent and emergency care centre (UECC) and the new safeguarding children's risk assessment which was shared with external partners and was due to be adopted. Leaders stated they had an action plan which incorporated a 'Think family' proforma in UECC all adults' assessments to strengthen the 'Think family' approach within the trust.

Partnership working had improved, and the trust met with the local council to discuss cases of concern and best practice. The chief nurse and named professional were the trust representative at various external panels, for example, the group for children sexual exploitation. Quarterly executive stakeholder meetings were held with

police, the local clinical commissioning group and other parties so safeguarding concerns and updates on improvement plans were discussed and shared. Clear and cohesive governance structures ensured safeguarding was embedded at all levels and was an integral part of multiple strategic and operational committee and panels meetings with monthly reports provided to the board. These processes provided a mechanism to monitor, measure performance and effectiveness across the trust.

Auditing processes were effectively in place enabling the trust to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. Named professionals and the safeguarding team conducted safeguarding audits as part the monitoring safeguarding performance and quality, which included child protection medical and body mapping completed as part of a holistic assessment.

Safeguarding Staff understood how to protect women from abuse and the service worked well with other agencies to do so. Staff had training on how to recognise and report abuse and they knew how to apply it. Staff received training specific for their role on how to recognise and report abuse. Midwives and medical staff completed level three children's safeguarding and level two adults safeguarding training.

South Yorkshire Police

A PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) is a regular assessment of police forces using inspection findings, analysis and professional judgment to assess how good forces are in several areas of policing. An inspection of South Yorkshire Police was carried out in late 2022, concluding with an ‘Outstanding’ grade for Protecting Vulnerable People. [Link to PEEL 2021/22: Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy – An inspection of South Yorkshire Police \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

Specifically finding that:

- The force has highly effective governance in place to protect vulnerable people
- The force understands the scale and nature of vulnerability
- The force has an effective performance and quality assurance framework
- The force listens to the views of victims to improve its processes
- The force works well to protect victims and children from domestic abuse (this in the context of the 4th highest rate of recorded Domestic Abuse in the UK)
- The force works well with other organisations to keep vulnerable people safe
- The force works well with other organisations to keep children safe
- The force has access to mental health support services for people in need of support
- The force has stopped the use of custody as a safe place for people detained under section 136
- The force understands the capacity and capability it needs to respond to vulnerable people

- The force has improved the well-being of officers and staff who investigate complex cases involving vulnerable people

Rotherham Council Children’s Services

An Ofsted inspection of Rotherham Council CYPS was carried out in June/July 2022. The findings supported a strong continuation of improving practice, resulting in the Council’s second Good rating in a row. [Link to: 50190644 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](#)

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

In terms of partnership working the report noted that:

Well-developed approaches to building resilience in families and supporting children in their communities appropriately ensure that only those with the highest needs are supported by statutory children’s services. Children are safeguarded well, including by the multi-agency Evolve service, which addresses child exploitation concerns. Children in care and care leavers services ensure good progress for those children for whom the council has specific responsibilities. Excellent direct work with children and the consideration of their views ensure that children are at the centre of decision-making, resulting in services that best meet their needs.

INSPECTION

In addition, leadership and a strong commitment to the children of the borough was clearly evidenced within the report;

Children's services are a clear priority for Rotherham Council, from the leaders of the council to the cabinet and across the different political parties., This has led to a whole-council commitment to children and families in Rotherham. There has been increased financial investment in order for services for children to continue to improve. There is a real focus on raising the aspirations of children across Rotherham. This can be seen in children being engaged in the development of the council plan through specific activity days.

In terms of partnership working the report noted that:

'Senior managers from key partner organisations report that children's services have continued to improve both strategically and operationally. They describe mature partnerships that allow healthy challenge across the organisations in order to ensure consistent high-quality services. They state that, due to the legacy issues, there is a real focus within the council on ensuring that things are done properly.'



OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2023-24



The Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) will have a new three-year plan from 2023 – 2026. It will maintain an overarching remit in ensuring that children throughout Rotherham are Safe at Home, Safe in the Community and that Safe Systems exist to deliver excellent services. The RSCP will deliver against three key strategic priorities in this period.

The strategic priorities are:

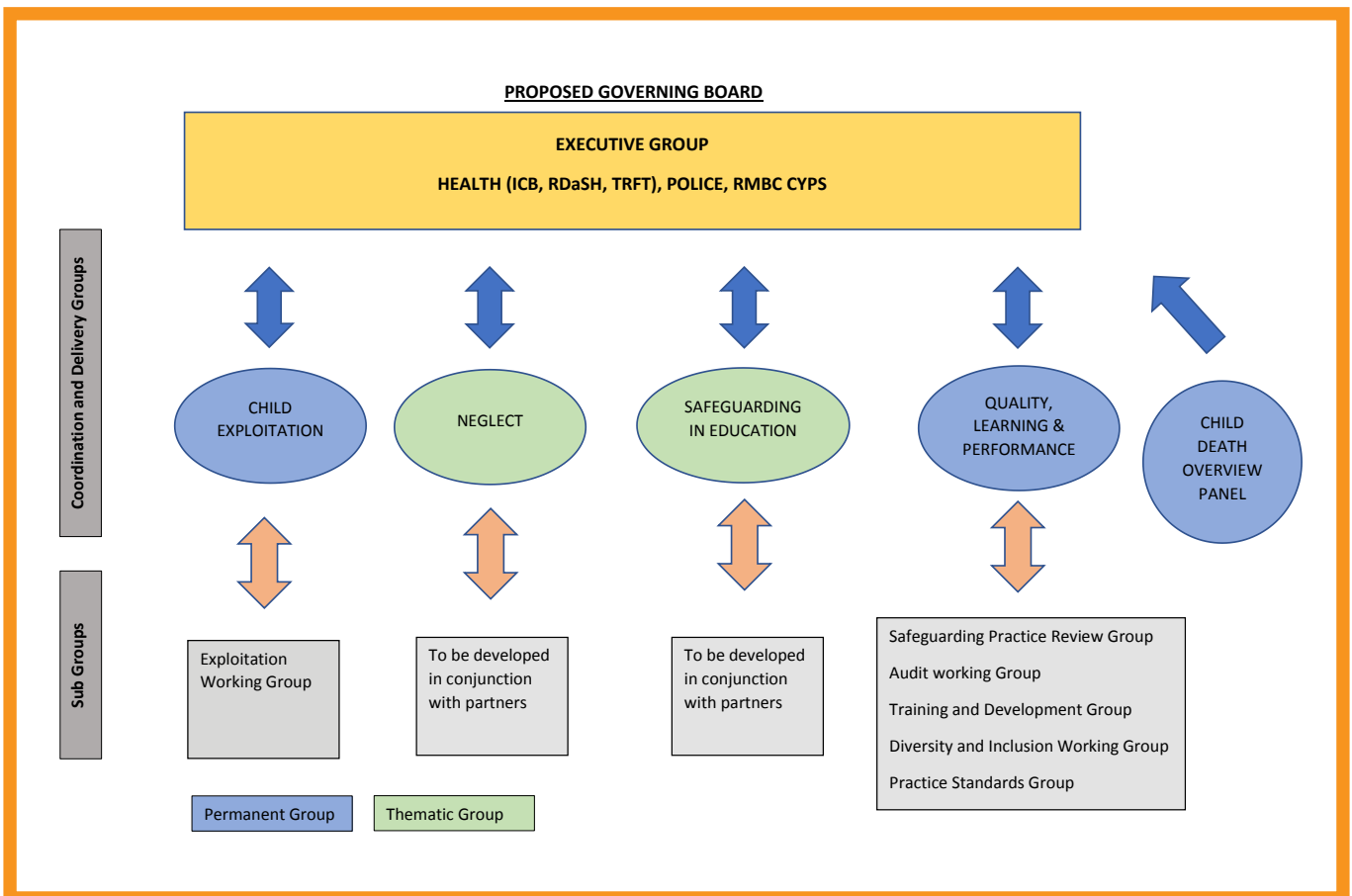
- **Neglect**
- **Safeguarding in Education**
- **Child Exploitation**

The following coordination and delivery groups will have oversight of the partnership’s activities against these priorities:

- **Child Exploitation Coordination Group** – This is an established group with a 5-year strategic plan in place.
- **Neglect Coordination Group** – Neglect continues to be a significant factor in relation to child protection at a national level and has potentially damaging consequences for the life chances of those children and young people affected. Early identification of neglect and multi-agency coordination is key in reducing harm. This group will have the remit in relation to overseeing the impact of the neglect strategy and in delivering action plans and scrutiny to this key area.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2023-24

- Safeguarding in Education** – This is a new group to be formed to address and counter vulnerabilities for children in not accessing an appropriate education setting, including persistent absence, missing education, exclusion and suspension, reduced hours and unsuitable elective home education. The delivery plan and actions from this group will link directly to the Neglect and Child Exploitation groups, in understanding and addressing those combined factors which contribute to increased risk for children. It is anticipated that the group will take account of the benefits of deeper links with the education sector, specifically in recognition of the challenges identified as part of the Working Together to Safeguard Children consultation processes.
- Quality, Performance and Learning Group** – this group will combine the remit of the previous Performance and Quality, Learning and Improvement and Safeguarding Practice Review (SPRG) delivery groups. It will have a broad remit with several subgroups reporting back, to include SPRG and training delivery.



OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2023-24

Child Exploitation

Child exploitation remains a key focus of the RSCP. There have been significant successes in Rotherham in the way in which children at risk of exploitation are supported by professionals. The CEDG has continued to look to develop our approach including devising a new workplan and a new data dashboard to give us a more nuanced understanding of how our actions are improving the lives of children in Rotherham. A new Child Exploitation Plan has been developed and agreed by the partnership which will support and enhance the support offered to children in line with the ethos of Prevent, Protect, Prepare and Pursue.

Safeguarding in Education

The RSCP is mindful of the national concern regarding children accessing education, specifically in the wake of the Covid Pandemic with 1 in 5 children persistently absent (Guardian 16 Mar 2023). More broadly the role that Education establishments and education in general plays in keeping children safe and determining their future opportunities cannot be overstated. The partnership is also mindful that Education services are not a statutory safeguarding partner, despite having much to contribute as highlighted in the Wood report (2021). Consequently, a significant priority for 2023 onwards will be the development of a 'Safeguarding in Education' Strategic delivery group, with broad aims to be developed in line with reducing persistent school absence, where safeguarding is a concern, ensuring children of school age are protected from Neglect and exploitation and increasing the involvement of education within the safeguarding arena in Rotherham.

Neglect

The RSCP Neglect strategy 2019-22 has expired and has driven progress in relation to the assessment and referral of issues of neglect for children in the borough. There are signs that neglect is recognised by professionals to a greater degree and the strategy has overseen a robust training offer. However, neglect in Rotherham remains a challenging area of child protection, with 33% of child protection plans being attributed to neglect as at 31 March 2023. At a child in need level, we see neglect representing the majority of the concern and input from professionals. Neglect has strong links to the other strategic priorities in Education and Child Exploitation, and it is felt that continuing to raise the profile of this issue in creating a neglect delivery group will support working across the partnership. A three-year plan to tackle neglect is anticipated to reduce the prevalence of neglect at the sharp end of child protection practice alongside preventative strategies and further developments in awareness, assessment and reduction.



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