

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 14 October 2024

Report Title

Scrutiny Review - Preparation for Adulthood for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to outline the outcomes from the Improving Lives Select Commission's spotlight review on preparation for adulthood, in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet receives the report and considers the following recommendations:
 - i. **School Effectiveness:**
 - a) That the support pathways available for preparation for adulthood for children and young people with SEND in mainstream education, in both the early years and post sixteen settings is reviewed to identify any areas that may require further focus and developments.
 - b) That education pathways relating to preparation for adulthood for children with SEND are reviewed, ensuring clear communication of the pathways to parents and carers.

ii. **Inclusion and Communities:**

- a) That information relating to the support available to parents and carers within communities is developed, enabling a seamless service that supports and empowers parent carers.
- b) That the feedback from the Autism Strategy Consultation is reflected in the support offer available, to ensure children and young people feel safe within their communities, at school and online.
- c) That there is a further focus on enhancing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in relation to this area of activity, with a particular focus on improving engagement levels with children and young people with SEND in communities, such as the Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Roma-Slovak Communities.

iii. **Communication:**

- a) That established networks and partnerships, such as the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum, are further embedded, to increase awareness raising and increase the number of SEND families that are engaged and reached in the Borough.
- b) That the process relating to Education, Health and Care Plans is reviewed to ensure the young person's voice is present throughout the process.

2. Cabinet agree to respond to the recommendations by December 2024 in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

List of Appendices Included

N/A

Background Papers

- Minutes of Meeting, Health Select Commission, 28 July 2023.
- Preparing for Adulthood Minimum Standards, January 2024.
- Quality Assurance Preparation for Adulthood Summary Report, March 2023.
- Preparation for Adulthood Work Programme, January 2024.
- Preparation for Adulthood Framework Guidance for Practitioners 2023.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Improving Lives Select Commission – 30 July 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 10 September 2024

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Scrutiny Review - Preparation for Adulthood for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

1. Background

- 1.1 Preparation for Adulthood has been an on-going area of interest for the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC) over recent years, following the SEND inspection in 2021. In discussions with the Improving Lives Select Commission, the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum highlighted that a greater focus was required to identify what was in place, to support successful preparation to adulthood for children and young people in Rotherham with SEND and consider whether there were any gaps in the available provision.
- 1.2 The Improving Lives Select Commission agreed to hold a spotlight review on preparation for adulthood which took place on 15th February 2024. The methodology is listed in section 3 of the report.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Preparation for adulthood (also known as transition) is the process by which young people who need support or care, move from services provided exclusively for children, to services provided for those over the age of 18, aiming to ensure a seamless transition. The Local Government Association describes successful preparation for adulthood as “A successful transition from children’s and young people’s services to adult care services and support, needs the young person, their families, and professionals to work together with the young person at the centre of discussions. Legislation gives local authorities a legal responsibility to co-operate, and to ensure that all the correct people work together to get the transition right for a young person”.¹
- 2.2 The support provided to children and young people assists with preparing for adult life and often includes the following aspects:
 - Education, Employment and Training
 - Friends, Relationships, and the Community
 - Health
 - Independent Living.
- 2.3 Why is Preparation for adulthood an identified area of focus?
- 2.4 Between the 5th and 9th July 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook a joint inspection of Rotherham, to judge the effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as prescribed in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection identified four areas of significant concern and prescribed that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) should be produced, to outline how the areas of significant concern would be addressed. The third area of concern identified by the joint inspection, related to the quality of provision for children and young people’s preparation for and transition to, adulthood.

¹ LGA Preparation for Adulthood Guide, [Preparation for adulthood](#) | Local Government Association.

- 2.5 The WSoA that was developed as a result of the inspection, identified the actions that the partnership would take to address this particular area of concern, how success would be measured and what difference it would make to Rotherham's children and young people with SEND, and their parents and carers.
- 2.6 Emerging from the concern identified and outlined in the WSoA, the Rotherham SEND Strategy was a partnership response that set out four main outcomes to ensure that good practice in working with children, young people, parents and carers would be achieved. Mirroring the WSoA, one of the four outcomes of the SEND Strategy related to preparation for adulthood and aimed to ensure all young people in Rotherham with SEND would be well prepared and supported, to exercise choice and control that would enable them to enjoy fulfilling lives.
- 2.7 The Department of Health also published statutory guidance to support the updated National Autism Strategy, the *Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives Strategy*, which was developed in December 2014. The revised guidance covered nine areas, with one of these areas being specific to preparation for adulthood and focused on planning in relation to the provision of services for people with autism, as they move from being children to adults.
- 2.8 The Rotherham Autism Strategy 2024-2027 also outlined Rotherham's Four Cornerstones, which structure the Strategy and associated priorities. The Strategy identified key areas, with one of the main areas focusing on preparing for adulthood. The Autism Strategy connects to both the Rotherham SEND Strategy and Learning Disability Strategy.

2.9 **Methodology**

Planning sessions were held in advance of the spotlight review meeting to determine the scope of the review. Briefing materials and resources were circulated in advance of the review session, to inform key lines of enquires (KLOEs). The review itself took place over a single afternoon, with many partners present to provide a range of perspectives and information.

- 2.10 An informal meeting was held with members of the Commission and the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum (RPCF) in advance of the review. During the meeting the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum presented their Annual Report and provided detailed information to members on the organisations vision, mission, values and strategic priorities. As part of the presentation to members, the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum provided information on the 323 workstreams that they were involved in. This included the Preparation for Adulthood Strategic Board, the Education Health and Care Plan Sub-Group and the Written Statement of Action Preparation for Adulthood Sub-Group.
- 2.11 The purpose of the review was to assess what measures were in place at that point in time, to support successful preparation to adulthood for young people in Rotherham with SEND and where required, to identify any potential gaps in provision or areas requiring further focus.

An information pack was circulated to each of the review group members, which contained the following reports and/or briefing documents:

- Preparation for Adulthood Framework Guidance for Practitioners 2023.
- Draft Preparation for Adulthood Quality Assurance Summary Report 2022-2023.
- Preparation for Adulthood Work Programme Draft 2024-2025.

2.12 The review links to the following Council Plan themes:

- Every child able to fulfil their potential
- People are safe, healthy and live well
- Expanding economic opportunity
- Every neighbourhood thriving.

2.13 The review group consisted of the following members:

- Councillor Lyndsay Pitchley (Chair)
- Councillor Wendy Cooksey (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Tony Griffin
- Councillor Maggi Clark
- Councillor Taiba Yasseen

2.14 Witnesses were drawn from the Council and its partners. The Chair would like to put on record her thanks for the contribution of each participant and their evident commitment to tackling this issue.

- Councillor David Roche, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.
- Assistant Director, Adult Care and Integration
- SEND Service Manager
- Commissioning Manager
- Head of Service, Adult Care
- Strategic Manager, the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum
- Operational Manager, the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum
- Psychologist, specific to inclusion.

2.15 The key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) and issues raised during the review focused on four main areas. They were identified as a result of the background information and the presentations provided to review members, from local authority officers and the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum and were as follows:

2.16 **Partnership working**

Overall, in relation to partnership working, it was apparent that there was a good strengths-based approach embedded throughout the service and partnership organisations, with robust partnership working in place which could be further enhanced. It was identified that there was a strong foundation with effective networks and many meaningful activities being completed. An

example of this was the clear focus on the voice of children and young people with SEND, which was present throughout the development of both the Learning Disability Strategy and the Autism Strategy. Both strategies provided clear evidence of partnership organisations working together to gather a range of views, in creative ways.

2.17 School effectiveness and education pathways

In relation to school effectiveness and education pathways, it was identified that there were good education pathways in place, as demonstrated by the quality standards in relation to education. However, it was evident that further focus was required to ensure pathways were communicated more clearly to parents, carers and young people, this was as a result of feedback from the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum. It was also acknowledged by the service, that there was less emphasis on preparation for adulthood and independent living in mainstream schools, both in the early years and post sixteen settings. The Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum also provided feedback which identified this as an area requiring further focus. As a result, the review group felt that further work was required, to identify the specific gaps present in current provision available for academically enabled children and young people, with SEND in mainstream education, to determine how this offer could be strengthened.

2.18 Inclusion and communities

In relation to inclusion and communities, the main area identified that required further focus was ensuring that children and young people with SEND could feel safe within their communities. It was evidenced during the review, that the co-production activities undertaken as part of the Autism Strategy development, highlighted feedback from children and young people with autism, which expressed that they did not feel safe in general within their communities, at school or online. It was also identified that whilst there was evidently clear embedded support in place for parents and carers, further work was required to ensure parents and carers could feel further empowered and supported in their journeys. It was also identified that further work was required in relation to Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), specifically in relation to children and young people with SEND in communities such as the BAME and Roma-Slovak communities, as members felt that this was a gap currently. The service acknowledged during the review that there was further work to be completed, which would focus on providing EDI training to employees and ensuring targeted work was completed within communities, to improve engagement levels within communities, such as the BAME and Roma-Slovak communities.

2.19 Communication

In relation to communication relating to preparation for adulthood, it was advised that 2,000 SEND families were currently engaging with and being reached by the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum, out of 11,000 SEND families identified at the point of the review, living within the borough. It was acknowledged that further work was required to ensure clearer pathways were

available and to ensure an increase in information and guidance available for parents and carers, to increase outreach and engagement to more SEND families residing within the Borough. It was also acknowledged by the service that further work needed to be completed to ensure the young person's voice was present throughout all Education Health Care Plans (EHCP), as feedback on the process by children and young people with lived experience, highlighted that the individuals voice was often missing from the EHCP process.

2.20 Questions were raised during the review session which led to the following discussion points:

- Members felt that the presentations provided during the review session demonstrated that there were good engagement levels within the service and relevant partner organisations.
- It was acknowledged that there was more work to do in relation to EDI. This would include a focus on educating employees in the Council and partner organisations and completing targeted work with minority communities.
- In relation to the Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) community, it was advised that the proportion of BAME children, young people, parents and carers accessing the support and services available with the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum, was higher than the Rotherham borough's average and the national average. The Rotherham Parent Carers Forum advised that they would be completing further work relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, with the aim of identifying any specific barriers communities may face to accessing services and any subsequent identifiable improvements.
- There would be a specific focus on creating more parent-to-parent engagement by sharing of family experiences. This would be achieved by creating and sharing videos which would include real life experiences of communities working with the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum.
- There were on average 11,000 children and young people on the SEND register in Rotherham and 3000 of those had an EHCP. It was clarified that children and young people did not require an EHCP to access provisions and services, in relation to preparation for adulthood, although it was acknowledged that there were some services that were led by EHCPs.
- In relation to the Rotherham Parent Carers' Forum's consultation feedback for the Autism Strategy and children and young people feeling unsafe in general in their communities, it was clarified that the feedback provided regarding feeling unsafe was not always due to where they lived, it also included examples such as feeling unsafe at school, online and in peer settings.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to receive the report and consider its response to the recommendations herein.

3.2 In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedures Rules, Cabinet will provide their response to the recommendations by December 2024.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 See paragraph 2.16 of the report.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Implementation of any recommendation made to a partner organisation is at the discretion of the relevant partner organisation.

5.2 Implementation of recommendations addressed to a directorate of the Council is a matter reserved to the relevant directorate. Timescales for Council directorates responding to scrutiny recommendations are outlined in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution of the Council.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 Any financial or procurement implications arising from this report will be considered as part of the Cabinet response to its recommendations.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are HR implications directly arising from this report that relate to the requirement for further workforce training to be completed with a focus on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion, to ensure targeted work could be completed within communities and to improve engagement levels with communities, such as the BAME and Roma- Slovak communities.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The review group has ensured that the implications for children and young people and vulnerable adults were considered throughout the review and are listed in the main body of the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission review group have due regard to equalities and human rights in developing recommendations.

10.2 In relation to equalities, the review group identified the requirement for further workforce training to be completed with a focus on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion, to ensure targeted work could be completed within communities and to improve engagement levels with communities. The review group recommended that there should be a further focus on enhancing equalities,

diversity and inclusion in relation to the area of preparation for adulthood, which a particular focus on improving engagement levels with children and young people with SEND in communities, such as the BAME and Roma-Slovak communities.

- 10.3 In relation to human rights advice and implications, the review group identified the requirement for progress relating to children and young people with SEND feeling unsafe in general within communities, online and at school. The review group recommended that the feedback from the Autism Strategy Consultation should be reflected in the support offer available.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no implications for CO₂ emissions and climate change directly arising from this report.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The implications for partners are described in the main sections of the report. Implementation of any recommendation is at the discretion of the relevant partner organisation. The recommendations contained in this report are offered acknowledging the contributions that have been made by each of the partner organisations.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There are no risks arising directly as a result of this report.

14. Accountable Officers

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	30/09/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/09/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	18/09/24

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